



## FANLETTER NOVEMBER 2004

### Dear fans

What a terrific feeling! I am 100% fit just before Houston and my thigh-injury has healed completely. I was very fortunate as it didn't bother me during the process of recovery thanks to the great work of my team and the decision to take this break. I now know that it has been the right thing to do.

It was one of the most difficult moments in my tennis-career so far. All the spectators and fans were eager to be part of my first appearance as the world's number one at my home tournament in Basel. I was also looking forward to the event immensely – returning to the Swiss Indoors where I had worked as a ball-boy 10 years earlier, respectfully passing balls to stars like Stefan Edberg or Wayne Ferreira. The tension amongst the tournament director, the journalists and the sponsors – just about everyone – was enormous. Then, suddenly, the bad news: a torn muscle-fibre in my left thigh. Competing was absolutely out of question. I had to inform tournament director Roger Brennwald of the news only a few hours before my opening match. But the thing really bothering me was how to explain it to my fans. They had all looked forward to this so much, how would I tell them that I was unable to play in Basel due to an injury? I ended up saying to myself that the easiest thing would be getting across what I felt like inside; expressing my huge disappointment and my annoyance about the situation. So I went out there and talked to the many fans and I had the impression that they understood. I am very glad that the Davidoff Swiss Indoors 2004 ended up being a big success with many great matches and a very sympathetic champion, Jiri Novak.

There has been a lot of discussion lately about the large number of top-players cancelling their participation in tournaments like Madrid, Basel and Paris. I have also been asked if I have an explanation and whether I see a solution for improving the situation. Tennis, like all other sports, is very demanding for a professional athlete. Even the more so for top-players as they usually play several rounds in a tournament. But we know this and have to learn to deal with the tournament schedule. Every player has to decide for himself how much is feasible. I, too, had to learn to make rational decisions even if my heart wanted the opposite, like not playing in Basel.

## **My diary**

Let's go back to the last exciting moments since my fantastic victory at the US-Open. By the way, it is terrific to see that a large number of new fans in the United States have joined our community since! I visited Hollywood and then flew off to Hong Kong where I gave interviews to the Asian media for an entire day. I appeared in shows for CNBC, CNN and ESPN/Star Sports TV and was interviewed by the Wall Street Journal Asia as well as the world's largest newspaper, Japan's "The Yomiuri Shimbun". To be honest, the discussions with the Asian journalists on topics on and off court were pretty demanding. I can definitely say that I've learnt a lot. I was pretty whacked after the non-stop media-marathon from 8.30 in the morning until 15.30 in the afternoon. But it certainly looks like the effort was worth it – my interviews are going to be repeated on CNN until Christmas!

After the stopover in Hong Kong I flew on to Bangkok. Just like so many times before, this year it all added up perfectly in Thailand. I didn't have too much trouble defeating Andy Roddick in the final 6:4, 6:0 – tournament victory number 10 this season. It was also a special experience to see the enthusiasm of the spectators in Bangkok. The whole week seemed to be one big party. Most games were sold out with over 10'000 fans and the run for tickets for the semi-finals and the final was immense. Hundreds or even thousands of spectators could only follow the matches on a big screen outside the stadium. It is certainly terrific for us players to see our sport booming at such a rate in Asia. In my opinion that is also one of the reasons why having the Masters Final in Shanghai again for three years as of 2005 is great. It is also up to us athletes to promote our sport on a global level and take responsibility as ambassadors - especially in Asia.

After the victory in Bangkok I was finally on my way back home via Dubai. Mirka and I had spent a total of six weeks travelling - from the end of August up until the beginning of October. I enjoy travelling a lot but after a trip around the world you do feel like a couple of days at home! I wanted to take enough time to prepare for Madrid and Basel, show a good performance in Paris-Bercy and top it all off by trying to repeat my victory in Houston. Well, I guess you all know what happened then...

## **My goals for 2005**

As you already know I have one major goal for 2005: defend my number one position. I have already planned the coming season together with my management and we have defined the tournaments for the first half: Doha, Australian Open, Rotterdam, Dubai, Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo, Rome, Hamburg, Roland Garros, Halle and Wimbledon. The Grand-Slams obviously have kind of a special status within all of these tournaments. Who would not want to win them? The 'threepeat' in Wimbledon would certainly be something extraordinary. But I definitely don't want to focus uniquely on winning the Grand-Slams, all the other tournaments are important as well. Unfortunately there is a consequence of planning my season this way: I will not be able to play the first Davis-Cup round for Switzerland. The dates for this round have been moved by a month from February to March. This is exactly the period during which I will be competing in Rotterdam, Dubai, Indian Wells and Miami, simply making it too much for me. It was definitely a very hard decision to take but my injury this autumn due to fatigue was a strong influence. In my heart I have the strong desire to play, to go out there and take on the Dutch with my team-mates, to cheer for my country. Experiencing team-spirit on court is certainly something that I miss in tennis. But my common sense said no to my participation in the first round. For the moment I want to leave open what my involvement in the second round will be. I can only say that chances are I will be there, even after a victory against Holland, which I think my mates are very well capable of achieving. In my opinion there are many arguments for renouncing the first Davis-Cup round. I nevertheless kept asking myself how my team-mates and fans in Switzerland would respond to my decision – and they were great! As far as I can see the team-members as well as the tennis fans show much understanding. On the one hand they are disappointed, but they understand me. And that's what counts most for me.

## **Making a difference**

All bad things also have a good side to them: The break I had to take these last weeks finally gave me the necessary time to dedicate myself to my Foundation. We organised a charity event during the Swiss Indoors and were able to gather CHF 110'000.-. It is incredibly motivating to see how much I can achieve. For this reason I want to spend more time with activities related to the Foundation in 2005, helping children in South Africa and supporting gifted, young athletes all over the world. I will also travel to South Africa in the first quarter of the year in order to see the impact of the projects in Port Elizabeth myself. Furthermore, I have agreed to become an ambassador for the UN's "Year of Sport". I am absolutely convinced that sports can help overcome prejudice and build bridges between cultures and nations. If I can make a contribution to this I am more than happy to do so and am very much looking forward to the task.

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I am always thrilled to see the amount of traffic on my website and also seeing how the number of registered users is increasing constantly – we have almost reached 14'000! I love reading all the comments and discussions and catch myself smiling every now and then doing so.

I would like to thank you for your loyalty and your interest in my person as well as all my activities. We have therefore decided to set up an entirely new concept. All I want to say for the moment is this: be prepared for plenty of great stuff next year!

Dear friends, I have to focus on the last matches for the season in Houston now. I'll give you a next update in Decemeber.

Take care, bis bald, à bientôt

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roger Federer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Your Roger