

Zeljko Franulovic: “The enthusiasm of Italian fans for the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters makes us proud”



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The 2019 edition of the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters was officially presented to Italian media at the Showroom of Sergio Tacchini headquarter in Milan. Every year the organizers of the prestigious Monte-Carlo tournament hold their traditional press conference in Milan to promote their event among Italian media and fans.

“The press conference we hold every year in Milan has become a tradition. It is very important for the promotion of our tournament. We want to thank Italian media and fans for their support and their loyalty, and our historic partner Sergio Tacchini, which is based in Milan, and their representatives Patrizia Bolzoni and Cristina Clerici for their cooperation. We registered a slight increase in tickets sold to Italian fans. Many Italian fans come every year showing their passion and enthusiasm for tennis and this makes us very proud.”, said Tournament Director Zeljko Franulovic, who won the Monte-Carlo title in 1970.

Franulovic has worked as Tournament Director since 2005, when the “King of Clay” Rafael Nadal won the first of his 11 titles at the historic Monte-Carlo Country Club. The former Croatian player looked back at a hugely successful edition in 2018.

“The 2018 edition was very successful in terms of ticket selling. The attendance record was broken once again with 136.671 spectators. Our tournament was already sold out since Tuesday. No less than 33% of them came from Italy. On the first day former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell and former Liverpool football player Jamie Redknapp took part in an original tennis charity event to raise funds for the Prince Albert II Foundation in Monaco, which supports projects to protect the oceans. Another special moment of this year’s edition was Boris Becker’s Hall of Fame Ring Ceremony. Our tournament was attended by 453 accredited journalists from 18 countries. We received an excellent TV coverage in France thanks to our French partners Canal + and C8 and Italian sports channel Sky Sport. We are happy with the new TV rights deal with Eurosport, which will broadcast the Masters 1000 tournaments in France from 2019. Our fans could cheer on the Next Gen players like Stefanos Tsitsipas and Denis Shapovalov, who will play at the 2018 ATP Next Gen Finals in Milan. We were happy that Kei Nishikori made a successful come-back from injury and kept the pace with Rafa Nadal in the final. Despite the defeat Nishikori produced the first big performance in Monte-Carlo. Nadal added another title to his impressive collection by winning his 11th Montecarlo title.

“I did not expect Nadal to dominate our tournament for many years when he won his first title in Monte-Carlo in 2005. That year I started working as Tournament Director. We bring good luck to each other. The Next Gen players will get stronger and will take over the old generation, who is getting older”.

Franulovic looks ahead at the 113th edition, which promises to live up to the proud tradition of this tournament. The Monte-Carlo Tournament will be held from 13th to 21st April 2019.

“Our tournament wants to hold to its tradition, but we also want to look to the future and improve our facilities. In 2019 we will open our new facility for TV production, a restaurant for players and a new room for interviews. Our location is smaller than in other Masters 1000 tournaments but is unique around the world and this makes our tournament so special. The ticket selling for the 2019 edition is going well. Italian fans and Italian tennis clubs have shown their continuous support over the years. We suggest our loyal Italian fans should go on our website to buy the still available tickets as soon as possible. We really hope that the best players like Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Alexander Zverev will be in top form in the week of our tournament. The Main Draw Ceremony will be held at the Jardins Méditerranéens of the Monte-Carlo Bay, the official hotel of the tournament. The traditional charity event will take place on 12th April on the Court Rainier III. It will be attended by the best players of the tournament. This year the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters has chosen to support the Monte-Carlo Red Cross, one of the most important charity organizations worldwide”.

Franulovic reflected on the future of tennis with the introduction of new tournaments like the Laver Cup and the new Davis Cup, which will start in 2019.

“On one hand I understand that players would like to have more tournaments, but as a tournament organizer I am not very happy because more tournaments mean a higher risk of injuries for players. The fact that the ITF has decided to invest a lot of money on tennis is positive for our sport, but I think that the new Davis Cup cannot be held during the period between the ATP Finals and the new ATP World Team Cup”.