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EXPERT: Eurosport tennis expert and two-time Grand Slam finalist Alex Corretja

TOPIC: Alex Corretja discusses some of the major talking points in tennis at the moment

On Rafa Nadal's decision to miss Wimbledon and the Olympics

I have to say I was pretty impressed with Rafa's decision not to go to Wimbledon. I was expecting Rafa missing the Olympics this year because he already has both the singles and doubles gold and he already carried the flag for Spain. So I knew that for him, at the moment, the most important thing is the Slams.

The best preparation for the US Open was probably to rest a little bit after Wimbledon and then get ready. But since I found out he is not playing Wimbledon - which he pretty much said after Roland-Garros, I understood he was giving priority to the US Open. Why? Because his chances are probably bigger on hard courts than on grass. I think he needs time to rest and to recover, for his body and game to get fresh again, and this is why I believe that it is a tough decision but it is similar to Roger at Roland-Garros. At some point they need to choose which tournaments are the best for them.

What do you think when the big players put their personal interests first before the interest of the game, all the Slams? Do you think that this is something that we need to question at some point?

There is no question. It is not because they have the credit to choose or whatever. They have been playing for 17,18 years at the top of the game. They've played more matches than anyone else and maybe winning more than anyone else. At some point they need to think about themselves which ultimately will mean thinking about everybody else.

If they burnout before we expect, we will miss them anyway! When they do this, it is not entirely because they think about themselves, it's because they do want to play longer and extend their career by two or three more years. So, I don't feel any disrespect towards Slams - not even to the crowds or to the tournaments or anything. It is actually ridiculous to think that way. They are the first ones that want to play, they want to continue making history in tennis and that's precisely why they have to decide that. That's exactly why Roger pulls out after three rounds of Roland Garros, otherwise his chances at Wimbledon are really thin!

Now for Rafa this is the same. Novak skipped Madrid two months ago and the results bore fruit when it came to Roland-Garros. So, I don't think we need to question those decisions. We need to respect them and understand it is more painful for them than for anybody else.

Do you think that in Rafa's semi-final against Djokovic, he may have hurt himself and that may have caused this withdrawal?

He only played one tournament before the clay court season - this was the Australian Open. Then he pushed himself so much through Monte Carlo, Barcelona, Madrid, Rome and Roland-Garros. Of course, his goal was to win another Roland-Garros - he could not make it. I think it was a wake-up call for him, showing him that he needs to be physically perfect to go and win seven matches at the best of five at a Slam.

Probably against Novak he felt something because of constantly playing (he won Barcelona, won Rome). Of course, the recovery these days after these long matches is not what it used to be, when he was 23 or 24 years old. And I think Rafa now understands that he needs to practice physically and

get into his best shape before he enters the next tournament. In the semis I don't know if he felt anything special, or hurt anywhere in particular, but he probably found out he is not as good as he could be in movement or in terms of explosivity. I think he can still improve a little bit and that will probably allow him to reach those final rounds at his best level.

Why do you think that all the big players are prioritising other tournaments than the Olympics, and do you think that tennis at the Games is in danger?

We started tennis officially at the Olympics in Barcelona. It means that for us in our careers it was not a dream to win the Games. First it was winning a slam. Then, the Olympics became something very important through the years. In Atlanta, and then Sydney and after. But we have four Slams a year which are by far the top of the game. When you think about your career, Slams count the most.

Talking about me, people are always saying I lost two finals at Roland-Garros instead of saying you won the Masters and also you played two finals at Roland-Garros. That's why I think that the Olympics are very important. They are nice because you represent your country and it is very popular but in the tennis world it counts more to have one more major, than one Olympic gold. It is great but making 21 Grand Slams will count more than one more medal in your trophy cabinet.

Players are traveling from a bubble to another bubble with all the restrictions to be applied in Tokyo and we don't know all the spectrum of those restrictions.

Do you think that also this long stretch of difficult moments is one more reason for those withdrawals?

Going to Tokyo means that you need to travel, you need to get used to a different time zone, it is very humid, it is going to be unbelievably hot - then you need to go away and play on hard courts in the US, which is a totally different time zone, and weather, country. You played on the clay then grass, then at the Olympics in Tokyo and then hard courts at the US Open - it is not a question of staying forever in bubbles, it is more about how can you recover going from and to so many different zones so many times and be ready to play.

I think that is why they need to make choices, unless you are very fresh or you never have achieved anything at the Games or you feel you don't have a great chance to win a Major. It is not easy to compete in everything. I am not so sure if Novak will go to the Olympics and if he does, he knows he will be risking his chances to win the US Open. So, I won't be surprised if he says "I am not going".

For athletes, the Olympics are the most important thing because they do it every four years, in athletic, swimming, gymnastics. For tennis players, they are very important but they are not the most important ones, that's why they are skipping it. It is not a matter of not willing to represent your country, it is absurd to say that, it is just because they need to prioritize.

For me one of the most memorable moments of my life was going to the Opening Ceremony of the Olympics in Sydney and then I won the bronze in doubles with Costa. Being on the podium is probably one of the best memories of my life, when they put the medal around your neck you feel like "wow, I've seen this so many times on TV... for so many years and now I am the one with this thing around my neck". This is huge.

But to achieve that requires an amount of effort and you are unsure of what is going to happen. At the ceremony, you are not sure if there will be people that gives you the goosebumps and brings up

the excitement levels!

On Naomi Osaka

Every case is different and in the case of Naomi and with everything that happened to her at Roland Garros, she needs the time to find herself again and to think and digest this situation. For her, the Olympics are in Tokyo, what can be better than that? For her to win a medal, even if she will have to deal with so much pressure - she knows how to deal with pressure - it is just a matter of acknowledging this is one of MY goals this year, I want to prepare for that.

If she can't do it, ok bad luck but it is a total different situation than when the Games are not in your home country. I'm sure that if the Olympics were in Madrid, most likely Rafa would play because it's totally different. So I'm expecting Naomi to participate, to be healthy and to be fired up and hopefully to be at 100% because that would be the best. It's so important for the tour, for the ladies, for the men's. So I think it's good that she will come back at least for the Olympics and then get ready for the US Open again.

Did Roger Federer's defeat in Halle come as a surprise to you? And what does it say about his level of play today?

First. Félix-Auger Aliassime is going to be one of the top players in the game. He's so difficult to beat. Some people feel like, oh, he lost eight finals, didn't win. I say I don't care. I really don't. He's going to be very good. He's so conscious and he's so professional. He's so well educated and he has so much potential to become so good that playing him in the second round, it was a very tough draw.

And I think Roger is still in the process, there is not a worry about his performance. I'm just worried he doesn't feel 100% on his knee because it's normal that his movements are still not the best. Probably he needs some more time. Is it going to be enough to be perfect for Wimbledon? Well, he needs a very, very good first week to get the rhythm that he needs to become good the second week and to perform well.

So I was more worried about his body language a little bit. He was, I think, inside himself. He's the only one who knows how he's feeling, the way he's moving. Sometimes it's not about complaining. It's a matter of you are playing and inside you, you feel "this is not how I want to feel". And I think Roger feels a little bit that way right now.

He needs a very good first week in Wimbledon to really have chances to win. I think if he gets the rhythm that he needs, he's going to be very dangerous but there are many players that right now can hurt him, when before it was maybe only two or three.

Roger Federer was very outspoken that he didn't like his attitude - do you think it's positive because he's conscious of everything?

It's not that his attitude was not good, it was that his attitude was showing a little bit of worry on his face. And usually you don't see that on Roger because it seems like everything flows and everything is perfect, but now it is normal. He's showing that even if he is probably the most talented guy ever, he will suffer like someone else and it's good that he shows that.

It's also difficult for him because that make us realize how difficult it is to comeback after a big injury. How difficult is it to come back when you are 39 years old. So everything that comes for Roger now, for me now, it would be a gift for him and especially for people who love tennis. We just can say, "OK, play as good as you can, and then we will support you, because you have given us so much that right

now we can only enjoy what Roger is doing and don't feel pain when you don't see him doing well."

It's what he has right now and you need to accept that and then he will be the one deciding whether or not he wants to continue. If he sees that he is ready to come back to his best level, he will continue. If he feels like he cannot be at the level he wants and can't win Slams. I don't think he will continue.

Another comeback this week with Andy Murray. Firstly, what was your personal emotion of seeing him back on court and on grass in England?

He suffered like crazy. He's been struggling big time and he's been realizing how much he loves tennis, I think way more than 10 years ago - I think at that time he was an unbelievable tennis player. But probably, he didn't realize that he loves tennis that much.

I remember being with him at home and he was watching tennis, he loved tennis and he was working so hard physically and in the gym, on the tennis court. But at that time, he probably didn't know that he loved the game that much. Now that he's been away for so long he feels like "oh, gee, I'm missing tennis".

So to see him back playing tournaments, matches, winning again and then struggling and suffering like this, it was so emotional! I think it's going to be very difficult for him to come back to his best tennis because I think he gave everything he had and now he just needs to play, have fun and enjoy and then see what comes - but not with major goals. I wouldn't recommend major goals for Andy more than saying, OK, let's go see if I can achieve that and then enjoy. That for me, is the only reason to continue playing tennis, enjoying and showing the whole world that he's an amazing tennis player.

With Rafa being out, with Roger not being at his best, can Novak Djokovic win the calendar Grand Slam?

It is a huge opportunity for him. Not just because of Rafa and Roger not feeling unbelievable - it is just because what he did at Roland-Garros, which was like a big hit on the table to all his opponents. Everybody pretty much expected him to be great at the Australian Open. Everybody knew that he could be good at Roland-Garros, but I'm not so sure that everybody was expecting him to come up with such a great performance for so long in those matches where he came back two sets to last against Musetti, when he suffered against the Berrettini and he let all his emotions out.

That moment is when I felt I think Novak was ready because that was for me the moment that he showed that he had the hunger to do something big. Against Rafa, he kept the level of his game for nearly four hours, and I think that was the best example to show he was ready to win Roland-Garros. And then winning after being behind two sets to love with the way Stefanos Tsitsipas was playing means that if he's able to make this big effort on clay, it will be much easier for him to make that effort on grass or on hard courts. So, I wouldn't be surprised at all if he completed the Grand Slam this year, winning both Wimbledon and the US Open, I think he is going to be very dangerous there.