

Our Promise: 'One Great Story Every Issue'

World Tennis Gazette

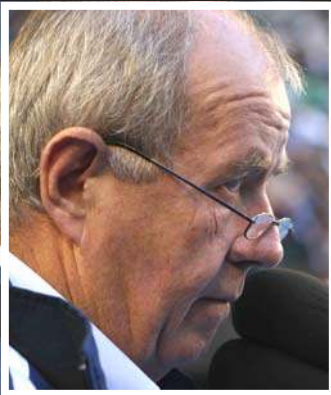
October 2008 Vol 2, No 2

Seeking

Perfect Pitch : How Announcers Changed the Sound of Tennis; The 'Four Tenors' Sing



DECORUM CENTRAL: Wimbledon's Centre Court, where announcers do not shout. *Photo by Art Seitz*



Melbourne: Craig Willis

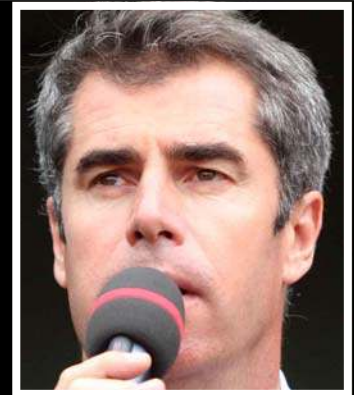
By JOHN MARTIN
WIMBLEDON -- Four-and-a-half minutes after the greatest match in tennis history, the All-England Club's announcer, Tony Adamson, stood at the edge of Centre Court to introduce the winner in proper Wimbledon fashion.

For nearly five hours, Adamson had been watching from the end of the court where players enter and exit tennis's most hallowed ground.

Twice, after rain delays, he moved upstairs above the Referee's Office to lean over a microphone in Room 325. There, from within the superstructure of Centre Court, he announced the resumption of play.

Now, Rafael Nadal was bent over in his chair, tears filling his

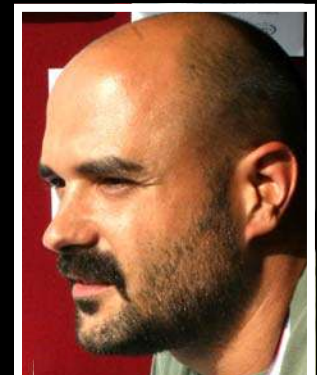
Continued on Next Page



Paris: Marc Maury



Wimbledon: Tony Adamson



New York: Andy Taylor

At Wimbledon, Restrained Speech; at U.S. Open, "It's Broadway!"



WIMBLEDON: Seated at desk microphone in Room 325, Wimbledon announcer Tony Adamson, 68, prepares morning greeting to spectators entering All-England Club.



UN-WIMBLEDON: Seated atop Arthur Ashe Stadium, U.S. Open announcer Andy Taylor, 34, left, introduces players for night match; DJ Dieter Ruehle prepares to play music.

eyes as he rubbed his cheeks. The crowd was still standing and cheering. In a few moments Nadal would accept the trophy, his treasure (plus \$1,363,000 in prize money) for defeating Roger Federer, 6-4, 6-4, 6-7(5), 6-7(8), 9-7.

Suddenly, the crowd's murmur began to rise to a roar. Nadal was about to ascend the throne as the first new Wimbledon champion in five years.

The Irish-born Adamson, 68, cleared his throat and began to speak in a voice that suddenly became a shout.

"And, the Wimbledon Gentlemen's SINGLES CHAMPION FOR TWO THOUSAND AND EIGHT!"

Adamson's voice was now flooding Centre Court:

"RA-FAY-EL NAD-AL!!"

"They knew the next announcement would be Rafa," Adamson said. "And I gave it pretty much everything, because, I mean, the atmosphere on the court at that stage, was absolutely electric."

Strictly speaking, Adamson's excited, high-volume introduction — understandable at the conclusion of this epic match — violated Wimbledon's standard of decorum.

Alone among the four major international championships, Wimbledon does not shout or dramatize its announcements. It does not introduce players with a voice drenched in a welcoming smile or theatrical *bonhomie*.

To do so, noted John Rowlinson, the All-England Lawn Tennis Club's Director of Television, would be to make a tennis match sound more like "the heavyweight boxing championship."

Rowlinson playfully conceded that the time for such histrionics might come: "Maybe in a hundred years!" he said with an impish smile.

This was the fourth day of this year's Wimbledon. Ten days later, it hap-

pened — the heavyweight champion arrived and all hell broke loose.

After the match, Adamson explained that his voice rose because he was "trying to be heard against a delirious Centre Court crowd." He insisted his response was not "un-Wimbledon" but a reaction to the tumult surrounding him, including the tears of a security policewoman who stood beside him weeping at the end of the heart-wrenching final.

Tanned and silver-haired, Adamson ("Addo" to his friends) is in his first year as the Wimbledon announcer after a distinguished career as a BBC correspondent for tennis and golf. He is sensitive to his new employers' wishes.

"They just want to keep it very ah, formal," he said. "They don't like too much informality."

Unlike Wimbledon's counterparts in Melbourne, Paris, and New York, he said, "We are different, of course, here."

Different, yet a defined sector in the world of international professional tennis, a 52-week carnival awash in marketed exuberance ("The Greatest Road Trip in Sports!" is splashed across USTA summer tournament advertising).

Surrounded by glitzy ticket promotions, VIP luxury boxes, and catered corporate galas, the world's top touring tennis players bask in the warm entertainers' spot-

light which now bathes virtually all aspects of professional sport.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the voices of the four top tennis announcers. Like operatic tenors whose mastery of pitch and lyric distin-

World Tennis Gazette

Vol 2 No 2, September 2008

A magazine for players, coaches, fans, and friends of tennis throughout the world. Each issue contains a story on a single subject with photographs and supplemental material. The stories and opinions are the sole responsibility of the editor. To subscribe, comment, or make suggestions, email: worldtennisgazette@yahoo.com.



Richard Osborn
Editor: John Martin

At Roland Garros, Speaking in Tongues, Sprinting to Microphones

guish them from their colleagues at lesser venues, they symbolize the final stages of tennis's decades-long plunge into show business.

To be sure, Wimbledon has moved into the modern era by creating a roof of space-age fabric for 2009. And this year, long after its rivals, it stationed giant video screens on Centre Court, for the first time displaying biographical notes and players' results.

But the All-England Club has resisted the siren call to expand its tennis announcer's task to include rousing the crowd. That is left to the French, the Australians, and the Americans.

Among them, the one with the boldest show business mandate is also the youngest. Andy Taylor, a 34-year-old morning radio personality from Sparta, Missouri, presides at the brassiest of the four majors: the U.S. Open.

When Taylor introduces players to the spectators, he embraces the words as if, in delight and wonder, he is saying them for the first time: "So, please let's give a warm Ashe Stadium well-come to NO-VAAAK JOCK-OH-VICH!"

Restraint? Taylor acknowledged a role for tradition at Wimbledon. "It's white shorts and, and pressed shirts," he said "and that has its place."

But Flushing Meadow is meant to be an "experience," he said. Taylor is the first to admit he is part of a team of engineers and artists who flood the grounds with music and commercials from speakers positioned all across the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.

A heavyweight boxing analogy misses the mark. "It's Broadway," said Taylor, describing the tone of excitement he aims to create as the Voice of the U.S. Open.

Swiveling in his chair high above Ashe Stadium, he introduces three teammates who exploit a sophisticated sound system:

Dieter Ruehle is the disk jockey, Tim Beach, the control room commander, and Del Munro is a sound engineer capturing voices and splashing them down into the cavern of the stadium. There, dozens of technicians (including camera crews) collaborate to meld throbbing music and Big Video Screen shots of patrons dancing in seats. One purpose, Taylor concedes, is to keep fans awake at 2:30 a.m. during five-set matches.

Despite his claim of being only one of a team, it is Taylor's silky voice which sets a kind of perfect pitch for the quintessential modern tennis announcer, someone who must adopt a tone that is warm, informed, and, above all, entertaining.

In Paris, Marc Maury is all that — and different. He wears a dark suit and conservative tie, part of a uniform



RINGMASTER: Surrounded by photographers, security guards and service staff on Chatrier Stadium court at Roland Garros, the French Open announcer Marc Maury, center, introduces Rafael Nadal as the 2008 champion. Maury is an actor and athlete who speaks several languages.

which matches the sometimes formal Parisian attire found on box seat patrons at Roland Garros.

A decathlon athlete turned movie and television actor (among his co-stars: Birgit Nielsen), Maury announces international track and field events and has broadcast from every Olympic venue for the last 14 years.

After this year's French Open men's final, Maury stood on Chatrier Stadium's clay, surrounded by swarming photographers and security agents. Unperturbed, he introduced dignitaries in a strong, relaxed voice.

"Live announcing (as opposed to films or videotaped television drama) is unique" he said, "because when you make a mistake, you know it right away."

Make no mistake, Maury is not a tongue-tied jock: During the two weeks at Roland Garros, he spoke English, French, and Spanish as he introduced players from several countries. For the future, he said, he's studying Russian.

One afternoon, Maury sprinted from one stadium to another, announcing the beginning of a match on one court (Lenglen) and the end of a match at the other (Chatrier), effortlessly keeping the entertainment rolling.

In Melbourne, Craig Willis, 54, performs the honors. A burly veteran radio broadcaster and announcer of rugby and Australian Rules Football, he is a familiar fixture in his country, often standing before as many as 100,000 howling fans at the Down Under version of the Super Bowl.

Standing courtside in Rod Laver Arena, Willis employs an elevated tone, suggesting that along with the evening's match, celebrities — perhaps even royalty — might ap-

In Melbourne, Aussie Familiarity and an Expectation of 'Darth Vader'

pear at any moment.

"My purpose is getting the crowd into an anticipatory mood," he said. "Delivery conveys importance."

Willis's guiding premise, he said, is "dramatic brevity."

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he begins, then pauses. "The idea is to give them the feeling that something is about to happen."

One night last January, Willis spoke in a deep, resonant voice: "Please give a warm Australian Open welcome to LLEY-TON HEW-ITT!"

Fans who do not always greet Aussie native Hewitt warmly erupted in cheers.

Later, when the match ended, Willis shouted with a flourish: "The man we call Rusty (Hewitt) -- he's through to the next round!"

Will entertainment values turn up at Wimbledon some day? Not in this



EXIT ANXIETY: Australian Open announcer Craig Willis glances at Justine Henin, who lost, 6-4, 6-0, to Maria Sharapova in January. He said some players see him as Darth Vader, fearful he will be at the microphone for what might be their final, career-ending defeat.

century, if we accept the appraisal by the All-England Club's jovial John Rowlinson. Still, the club has considered one ground-breaking advance: employing a female announcer.

four of the 2008 Championships," Adamson said.

"Now, I have the latest weather forecast for you, which is pretty good, I have to say..."

That said, Wimbledon's restraint creates a remarkably enduring charm.

Early in this year's fortnight, Wimbledon announcer Adamson listened to a reporter impersonate Taylor's delivery at Flushing Meadow.

"Yeah, I love all that." Adamson said, "I love all the, ah (pause), but you see they like to be understated here. I mean, I (pause) that's the way they like it. They like you to be quite informal and friendly, and even if it's gonna rain, tell 'em nicely."

Moments later, he began work. "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," he said into a microphone, sounding friendly and informative.

"Welcome to day

From Sparta, Missouri, a Silky Voice Capable of Spine-Tingling Announcements

How did a morning radio personality from Missouri wind up center stage at the U.S. Open?

The tennis-playing Taylor ("My wife and I play; it's really pathetic!") was brought to New York six years ago by the USTA's impresario, Arlen Kantarian.

The purpose was to put Taylor aboard a team that could, in the parlance of sports, dictate play. It was tasked with creating and performing entertainments (video, audio, verbal) that would cast a happy spell within Ashe Stadium. The team now records and plays program notes and commercials heard all across the grounds.

"I felt we needed a voice, not the voice of the wrestling, not the sleepy voice, something in be-



WARMUP: Reciting their career highlights, U.S. Open announcer Taylor introduces "Fah-breese San-tor-oh!" and "ANDD-dy ROD-dick!"

tween," said Kantarian, "and when you hear it you know."

Kantarian said he knew it when he heard Taylor at a Federation Cup match in 2002 in Springfield, Missouri, where Taylor was an-

nouncing as a favor for a friend.

Kantarian marched up to the booth and offered Taylor a Davis Cup tryout. Boston-reared Taylor, 28, accepted and clicked — big.

"There are certain people that have the ability," said Kantarian, "to send those tingles down somebody's spine or to make 'em laugh or to make 'em cry. Andy just has a very natural way of doing that."

Now 34, Taylor keeps his day job at KTTS Radio in Springfield, near his home in Sparta, where he lives with his wife, Dionne, a photographer. During the U.S. Open, Taylor arrived early each morning to go on the air in Missouri from a remote location, 1,096 miles away, sitting at a computer and microphone atop Ashe Stadium. — J.M.