

Tatjana Maria not putting herself under pressure on her return to Wimbledon

29/06/2023 When sensationally reaching the semifinal, Tatjana Maria last year wrote a German summer tennis fairy tale at Wimbledon. On her return to the world's most important Grand Slam that begins on Monday, she is however not putting herself under any pressure. "I'll keep fighting to the last shot in every match," she said in an interview with Porsche Newsroom. "But I also want to enjoy everything together with my family."

The time-honoured All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club is a very special place for Tatjana Maria. On the famous Church Road in South-West London, she last year celebrated her biggest career success when sensationally reaching her first ever Grand Slam semifinal – at the age of 35 and as a mother of two children. Tennis fans all over the world took her to their hearts. "No matter where I go, people still mention Wimbledon," says Tatjana Maria. "Then they tell me just how unbelievable they found it and how much they were rooting for me. It gives me the strength and motivation to continue."

The Porsche Team Germany player who grew up close to Stuttgart in Bad Saulgau and who now lives in Florida with her husband Charles and her daughters Charlotte and Cecilia is looking forward to returning to Wimbledon. “It’s my favourite Grand-Slam. It has a special atmosphere and a unique history that can be felt in every corner of the grounds. And then I also love playing on grass,” she says. Last week, she was the runner-up at the Veneto Open, a grass court tournament in Italy. She is therefore fit for Wimbledon. When looking back to 2022, memories race around her head: “They were an unbelievable two weeks. How the people reacted to me, a mother of two that gives her all and is also successful, was a wonderful and very emotional experience. The nicest thing was that I was able to experience everything with my family. It’ll remain unforgettable.”

“I want to enjoy such wonderful moments in the future too”

The success has given her the confidence and strength to do everything to keep improving her game. “I want to enjoy such wonderful moments in the future too. It’s something I work on every day, and I try to give my best,” she says before also stressing: “I’m however not putting myself under any pressure. For sure, I made it to the semis last year and perhaps people are now expecting that things will go just as well again. I’m hoping for the same. As I won’t be seeded then it’s a question of whether the draw is kind to me. It’s something I can’t influence.”

The impression that, after all she has experienced, she will be competing in Wimbledon with a certain relaxation is something she does not want to convey. “It’s still a Grand Slam. One’s not so relaxed,” she says with a wry smile. “I’ll do my best in every match and fight for every ball. But I’m not putting myself under any additional pressure by saying that I once reached the semifinals and have to do it again.” She would naturally love to go so far once more, “perhaps even further” as she says. However, first and foremost she will be concentrating on her game and enjoying the fantastic atmosphere.

Since Wimbledon 2022, Tatjana Maria is seen as the tennis mum par excellence and one that has proved that a child does not automatically mean the end of one’s playing career. It is something she is proud of. Do other players see her as a role model? “I think they do,” she says. “In my example, they see that it’s possible to have a child during one’s career and then return to the professional tour. I after all have come back twice, first after Charlotte’s birth, which amazed many, and then a second time after Cecilia was born. It’s possible.”

“Mums on the tour should receive more support”

The fact that other players continue their careers after giving birth, like for instance Elina Svitolina, who played impressively at the French Open, is for Tatjana Maria “a positive development, also for the WTA Tour”. She draws hope from it “that mums on the professional tour will receive a bit more support in future.” She does not demand anything unfulfillable from the officials. “It would be helpful if all the big tournaments would provide a nursery. It’s something only offered by the Grand Slams and a few tournaments like the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix. There’s been one there for years now.” If other

tournaments would follow suit then she says, “It would be very positive for the children and the mums.”

In the world rankings, Tatjana Maria is by far the best placed German. It makes her more proud than sad when it comes to German women’s tennis. “We’ve got many young players that possess lots of talent and ability,” she says. “We don’t have to have too many worries, after all we’ve qualified with Porsche Team Germany for the Billie Jean King Cup finals in Sevilla in November.” In any case, she is convinced that one can play for longer and at a higher level. “Not everything,” she says with a smile, “is a question of age.”

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