

Anke Huber: “We’re all looking forward to the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix"

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05/02/2022 The Australian Open was the year's first tennis highlight. In our interview, Anke Huber, the Operating Tournament Director of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix, speaks about the winner Ashleigh Barty, the new generation in women's tennis and about the players she would like to see at the tournament in the Porsche Arena from 16 to 24 April.

Anke Huber, last year Ashleigh Barty won the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix and now she's managed the same feat at the Australian Open. What do you think about her performance?

Anke Huber: Her win hasn't really come as a surprise. She played an outstanding tournament and only

had a little wobble against Amanda Anisimova en route to the final. Otherwise, she was heads and shoulders above the rest.

The sports-mad Australians have been waiting since 1978 for another Australian ladies singles champion. How does she manage to deal with the enormous pressure like, in particular, in the final against Danielle Collins?

Huber: What was really impressive was how calm she stayed when 5-1 down in the second set, and then when finishing the job off. She always has a game plan when on court, something that's obvious when you watch her. And she keeps to it right up until the end, no matter what happens. She also did just that with such aplomb for a person of her age in the final. She's after all still only 25. The way in which she dealt with the pressure of expectation she and the millions of Australians put herself under to win the tournament shows her great class.

What have we also learnt from Australian Open?

Huber: It was nice to see that a new generation is establishing itself and is slowly filling the gap left behind by, or example, a Serena Williams. I'm talking about players like Iga Swiatek, Barbora Krejcikova and also Amanda Aminisova. If they manage to perform more consistently at a top level, then the future belongs to them. At the moment, they are not yet in a position to challenge Ashleigh Barty for the No. 1 spot at the top of the world rankings.

You yourself stood in the final of the Australian Open back in 1996. Your opponent at the time was the outstanding Monica Seles. What memories do you still have of the final?

Huber: It was my first grand slam final and then in Australia where I always loved playing. I'll always remember it even though I unfortunately didn't manage to win it.

Like in the previous year, Angelique Kerber got off to an unlucky start to the season. What do you think the top German player is capable off this season?

Huber: She only travelled very late to Australia due to a corona infection. It was naturally very difficult to immediately have to play a grand slam tournament. However, when she's fit again and practicing hard then I'm confident she can do great things again this year. It's never easy winning against Angie. She runs and battles and makes very few mistakes when she is in good form. Top players also need to have a good day if they are going to beat her. I'm certain that we'll soon be seeing her playing fantastic matches.

Let's return to Ashleigh Barty and Porsche Tennis Grand Prix. Having her back again this year in Stuttgart would be a massive boost for the tournament.

Huber: For sure. In my mind, the Porsche Arena crowd is going to love her. We also naturally would love her to come. We haven't yet had a confirmation from her but we're still working on it. In my view, the

chances are good. She won last year's tournament, the surface suits her and the fact we play indoors is also up her street. She after all always stressed that she felt at home in Stuttgart. Whenever a player wins a tournament, it basically means that things went well for her and therefore there's nothing really speaking against her returning a year later.

You have three wishes for players at the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix. Which ones would you choose?

Huber: Alongside Ashleigh Barty, I'd also love to have Naomi Osaka and Angelique Kerber at our tournament. We've already spoken about Barty. Osaka is not only a fantastic player but also a very interesting personality and one that everybody knows in the meantime. It she's fit and in form then she plays excellent tennis. In Australia, she didn't give the impression of being fully fit and was very unlucky to lose. But I think she's on a good path again. As for Angie, she's just perfect for the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix. Our crowd has taken her to heart and supports her so enthusiastically. As a two-time Stuttgart winner, she would definitely be a real enrichment tennis-wise.

In the first weeks of the year, it appears that normality has returned to the WTA Tour. How big are the hopes that things will stay that way?

Huber: The new year has started well and I'm pretty confident this season can go ahead as normal. We're so looking forward to the tournament and to welcoming as many tennis fans as possible in the Porsche Arena.

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