



ATP World Tour Finals - 2016

Britwatch Sports

ATP World Tour Finals - Thoughts from the Big Three

By Ros Satar

- Andy Murray, Novak Djokovic & Roger Federer talk to the press ahead of the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals
- The recent WADA findings on the scale of doping in Athletics drew strong opinions from the World Top 3
- The focus continued on Murray's hopes for a good run here and the Davis Cup Final

LONDON, UK – What should be the culmination of a great season of tennis perhaps found itself unfairly shadowed by the recent World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) findings on the Athletics doping crisis.

Tennis: Full Draws and Schedules

It is fair to say that the sporting world was rocked by the sheer extent of WADA's findings and perhaps the more damning accusations that Athletics' governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) were implicated in covering up the scandal.

But was it a surprise? Not to Roger Federer, who believes that more should be done by the sport in general to govern itself.

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He told the press, during the pre-tournament press conference: “I think they are trying their best. I think we can always do more. Whenever you make the quarters, of any tournament in my opinion, where the points and money become greater, just know you will be tested. That would be very clear and simple.

“That’s how you scare off people too. The country too, I think the Swiss programme is tough and strict. Then again out of competition, that should be increased, too. I don’t see them very often. It should happen more often.”

He did think though that perhaps it was not stringent enough in competition, as it stands:

“I don’t understand that you have a run, win a couple of events and don’t get tested. It just can’t be that way. I’m always surprised I win a tournie, I walk off the court and I’m like where’s the doping guy? I don’t get that part. I hope the future’s going to be better and we preserve the good clean image of our sport.”

World No. 1 and three time defending champion Novak Djokovic concurred:

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“Of course with Olympic Games coming up, there’s always a certain subject/controversies coming up. Obviously people are trying to discover as many information as possible. Of course I am for a clean sport, and for transparency, fair and square conditions for every athlete, because I think from the perspective of tennis we’ve been very good in terms of doping scandals.

“We haven’t had many, especially not in the high level. You know you get tested quite a lot throughout the year, on the competition and off as well, so I think in terms of that, well I don’t know how many times they test the other players, but from what I hear, it’s a pretty solid number which works/allows the anti-doping agency and the ATP to track down possible things that the athletes can do and they’re not allowed.”

Andy Murray, who has a shot at finishing at World No. 2 at the end of this season has always been forthright on his views of doping in sport, and in the past has suggested that the prize money be put towards better finding anti-doping measures in the sport.

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He re-iterated: “I do think the more transparency, the better. There’s absolutely no question about that. And I do think that we as a sport could invest more money in the anti-doping process. The prize money now is so, so high that there’s no reason for us not to have [this] as perfect as possible, a process really.

“I do think that the more money that’s invested in it gives you a better chance of catching everyone that’s cheating and also gaining the trust of the public as well which I think across sport in general is fading. It seems like every week something new is coming out and across a variety of different sports and we just hope that tennis can remain as clean as possible.”

Of course for the Brit there is more at stake than just the prospect of advancing to the final for the first time, but ahead of that, Murray will be a pivotal part of the British team battling against Belgium for the Davis Cup.

After drawing some ire for stating that he might consider skipping the ATP season finale in London, and admitting that this may not be his priority, he still gave himself a good fist of a chance of going very deep here.

He said: “I think definitely I have a chance to win here. I do think that I have to be a bit realistic in the first few days. I have just switched surfaces and balls and now I will be going back again and I might not be timing the ball perfectly at the beginning of the week but as it goes on hopefully I will start to play better tennis. I do feel I have an opportunity here. I think the conditions in Paris are fairly similar to here so it will be interesting to see how I get on. But I do think I am playing well enough to go far.”

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We saw at the WTA Finals in Singapore just a couple of weeks ago that even if you lose a couple of rounds, it is not impossible to make it into the knock out stages. That probably is not the scenario that most want to entertain – in fact the mere thought of scenarios are enough to send most of us running for calculators, abaci, or just plain running!

Djokovic said: “Of course it does give you an option to survive the group stage with one and eventually two lost matches but I’m definitely not considering to lose any matches. I’m going to approach this tournament as any other and every match with the intention to win.”

Of course neither Djokovic or Federer are strangers to the challenge of playing the ATP World Tour Finals and then travelling on to play at the Davis Cup Final – so what advice could they give Murray?

Federer said: “I think you have to ask Stan. He was in good shape. He handled it very well... we played same amount of matches here, but I was dealing with a back problem from Saturday night ‘til Davis Cup. Stan handled it great, played unreal against Tsonga.

“Me, it took a match to get confident, knowing that I could play. A big relief for me. But it’s possible. I know it’s a surface change but it’s something we do on many occasions throughout the year, maybe not within a few days, but we’ve done it in juniors, the pros, many levels all the time. You know if you had more time you’d play better tennis, but it’s not a tournament, it’s just a 2-3 day thing. I think it’s a great challenge for Andy and I’m sure he’s excited about it.”

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Murray's request for a Monday start was granted and he will kick off his campaign against David Ferrer, over whom he scored a win in the Paris Masters semi-final, while Federer and Djokovic will vie once more in their rich rivalry, but for the first time this year, not in a final.

Play starts for the 2015 Barclays ATP World Tour Finals on Sunday, at 2pm GMT.

Main Image Credit: Julian Finney/Getty Images

No Replies to "ATP World Tour Finals - Thoughts from the Big Three"

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ATP World Tour Finals - Predictions

By Britwatch Tennis Team

- Group Stan Smith: Novak Djokovic [1], Roger Federer [3], Tomas Berdych [6], Kei Nishikori [8]
- Group Ilie Nastase: Andy Murray [2], Stan Wawrinka [4], Rafael Nadal [5], David Ferrer [7]
- Britwatch's Tennis Writers make their picks

LONDON, UK – It is all eyes now on the capital where the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals returns once more – and the Britwatch Tennis Team got together for their regular fisticuffs over who will reign in London

Tennis: *Full Draws and Schedules*

Team Picks:

	WINNER	DARK HORSE	SHOCKER	HOW WILL MURRAY DO
Ros	Djokovic	Wawrinka	Murray	Group-stages
Phil	Djokovic	Ferrer	Murray/Nadal	Group-stages
Niall	Djokovic	Wawrinka	Murray	Group-stages
Naomi	Wawrinka	Nadal	Murray	Group-stages
Glenys	Djokovic	Ferrer	Berdych	Semi-final

Ros

ATP World Tour Finals - Predictions

Champion: Novak Djokovic – Right now, unless someone nicks his bags off the River Ferry I can't see anyone beating him. He is focussed, and is playing the best tennis of his career at the moment. With the Paris title tucked up under his arm he will lift the title again come a week on Sunday. Predictable? Maybe but dominance in the sport comes and goes, and it is his turn at the top.

Dark Horse: Stan Wawrinka – He may have gotten a bit of a bloody nose in his home tournament in Basel, but when he is on, he can give even the best a headache – just ask Djokovic about the French. He is looking more and more at home now at this level, and why not – like Andy Murray, he's now a two-time Slam champion and while both have a way to go to catch the likes of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal or Djokovic, they are the most credible challengers for the meaty titles right now. This could well be Wawrinka's year.

Shocker/How Will Andy Murray Do: Group Stages – Murray was confident in pre-tournament press and has been in good form, with a great run to the Paris Masters final for the first time in his career. He told the media in the pre-tournament press conference:

“I think definitely I have a chance to win here. I do think that I have to be a bit realistic in the first few days. I have just switched surfaces and balls and now I will be going back again and I might not be timing the ball perfectly at the beginning of the week but as it goes on hopefully I will start to play better tennis.

“I do feel I have an opportunity here. I think the conditions in Paris are fairly similar to here so it will be interesting to see how I get on. But I do think I am playing well enough to go far.”

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We have seen it is possible to have a shot at the knock out stages with just one win out of three at the WTA equivalents, and Murray's challenges will start with the ever gritty David Ferrer, before going on to face Nadal and Wawrinka. The Swiss could well spring the win, and Nadal could get some measure of revenge for his loss to Murray in at the Madrid Masters final. A loss to Wawrinka is quite possible, but it could fall to Nadal to deliver that final blow.

Phil

Champion: Novak Djokovic – The World Tour Finals is an exciting end to the 10-month ATP tour. The major downside to the tournament is that the lengthy and intensive tour schedule takes its toll and this can often be seen in the results of the season-ending finals. For example, Federer not contesting the final last year; Nadal, even in his prime never taking the title. The looming Davis Cup final casts another shadow on the tour finals, with Murray reportedly only playing due to contractual obligations and already practicing on clay in preparation for the final in Belgium.

That said, one player stand above the rest in his physical ability to train, recover and channel all remaining ounces of strength and adrenaline; Djokovic. Despite reaching the final of all four grand slams and eight 1000 series finals, including the Paris final a week ago, he is my favourite. Federer I think may get to the final but he had the misfortune of being in the same group as the world number one so would most likely have to face him twice to win.

Dark Horse: David Ferrer – I'm not sure you can be a Dark Horse in a tournament featuring only the top eight players in the world, but Ferrer would be my top choice. I don't see Berdych or Nishikori coming out of their group over Federer or Djokovic. Meanwhile Ferrer's group features Murray who, as mentioned, is prioritising the Davis Cup final, and Nadal who does not have the best record as the O2.

ATP World Tour Finals - Predictions

Shocker: Andy Murray & Rafael Nadal – Neither will qualify from their group.

How will Murray do: Group Stages

They say nothing is as good preparation as winning matches. However Federer showed that was not the case last year when he went straight from the World Tour Finals to the Davis Cup final and was distinctly off colour. I expect (or maybe it's just hope) that Andy will get one win under his belt, two losses and move onto Belgium...

Niall

Champion- Novak Djokovic: It would be silly to pick somebody else wouldn't it? Djokovic is a dominant world number one and the favourite for every tournament he enters, and this one is no different. He is full of confidence after winning Pairs to extend his winning streak to 22 matches and the slow court suits his game perfectly. Djokovic to win the title without dropping a set.

Dark Horse- Stan Wawrinka: Avoiding Djokovic is big for the French Open champion. Wawrinka is inconsistent, but when he plays well he can beat anyone in the world. The Swiss has proven that his game suits these courts with two semi-final appearances previously, one of which he had match points to make the final. The slow courts allow Wawrinka to take a big swing and unleash his bombs off both wings, and the group suits him perfectly. He has won the previous match against all three opponents in his group, and he could go 3-0 here. From there who knows?

ATP World Tour Finals - Predictions

Shocker/How will Andy Murray do – Group Stages: With one eye on the Davis Cup final, there will be doubts that the best of Murray will be seen next week. The Brit also has a tough group with Wawrinka and Nadal as opponents, so he could easily lose two matches and be gone after the first round.

The last time Murray faced Wawrinka, even though it was two years ago, the Swiss ran out an easy winner in straight sets. The Brit has always struggled with the fourth seed and now Wawrinka is a better player. It will likely come down to the Nadal match and with the Davis Cup on his mind, Andy will not be able to replicate his Madrid performance. The sole win will come against Ferrer who will likely go 0/3 in the group.

The second seed will exit in the group stages and will take the next flight to Ghent to prepare for the Davis Cup final, which is his priority.

Naomi

Champion: Stan Wawrinka – He has made a habit of stepping up his game a few times a year and I think this will be one of them. Maybe he can't beat them consistently right now but he can beat them all when he is on. I reckon he will be able to pull out the standard he did in Paris, as he is due another great run.

Dark Horse: Rafael Nadal – After picking Wawrinka as my Champion the Dark Horse is a tough position to fill. If Nadal had found himself in the other group I don't think he would get through, but he will get through this one and the feeling of being back in the semi-finals could remind him that he has a fair few Grand Slams under his belt and he might just manage to wind the clock back a few years.

ATP World Tour Finals - Predictions

Shocker/How will Andy Murray do: Group Stages – Although Murray has had such a fantastic year and it would be brilliant to see him finish number two, I do think there is just too much on his plate for him to get a good result here. He is chopping and changing surfaces, will most likely be involved in discussions about who to pick for the second GB singles and will be saving himself for Davis Cup even if it is subconsciously. He will come 3rd in his group with his only win coming against David Ferrer but also taking a set off Nadal.

Glenys

Champion: Novak Djokovic – Can't really see past the World No. 1 at the season ending championship. Being practically unstoppable this year I'd be surprised if anyone managed to defeat him on the hard court

Dark Horse: David Ferrer – Why not! – He has qualified again without being alternate and if he can defeat Nadal and Wawrinka then I have him in the semi-finals too. With a bit of luck on his side on with the other group and he could win overall

Shocker: Tomas Berdych – to win no matches at all. He is in the group with Djokovic, Federer and Nishikori, that is going to be very tough to progress from.

How will Andy Murray do – Semi-finals: Murray needs to win two matches in the Round Robin to secure the end of year-end No. 2. unless Federer wins the whole event. With the Davis cup final the weekend after this ends I see Murray getting to the semi-finals as he will win at least two of his matches (and possibly all three) – so I'm going with a semi-final finish then back to the clay.

The Barclays ATP World Tour Finals takes place between 15-22 November.

Main Image Credit: David M Benett/Getty Images

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No Replies to "ATP World Tour Finals - Predictions"
