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Tomorrow the French Open starts but the Swede may not recover

PARIS. As an English-speaker would say, we've come to the second leg of the Grand Slam. The legs are four, and on them, the ATP (Tennis players Association) may like it or not, firmly leans the throne of our kingdom.

The decision to manage the circuit taken by the players (and by the agents who are behind them surely not for altruism), has paradoxically increased the importance of the Slam tournaments, downsizing the others to a sort of anonymous B Series.

The rule that allows to discard the tournaments played over the fourteenth one, knotted with the validity of the engagements, produced incalculable damages. The greatest negative protagonist of the new situation has been Andreino Agassi, but we had never seen so many tennis players ready to give up, to wave a white flag with a dollar printed in the middle.

In the stadium named after the aviator and walker Roland Garros nothing similar will happen. The first demonstration of guarantee is the presence of the top sixteen tennis players of the world in the men's draw and of the top seventeen in the women's. Only Martina Navratilova is already practicing on grasscourts, with a choice that was already winning last year.

Stefan Edberg could be injured again, as unfortunately has often happened to him. But it would only be adversity, certainly not reluctance. To be cruel Edberg's preparation to claycourts didn't seem unexceptionable for a player like him, much more at ease on grass or hardcourts.

But playing too little doesn't also mean getting injured, as he did in the World Team Cup, a national teams exhibition, in which a full effort is not necessary.

In approaching the great tournament we must therefore remember that Edberg could be absent, or not entirely healthy, as Becker might have not perfectly recovered from the chronic troubles that affect his too many muscles.

We must also remark that the two top-ranked players were protagonists in the year of Chang's miracle, but miserably disappeared last year. If surface rankings existed, and I don't hope so, the two great blonds wouldn't surely be at top and the bottom of the draw (...).