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Pat Rafter in love with padel: “I thought I would just beat a Padel player with strong volleys and smashes...”

Padel is **Pat Rafter's** second life. Two tournaments in a row (**FIP RISE Australian Open** and **FIP Promotion Melbourne**) to breathe competitions again. Rafter, at the age of 26, became world number 1 in tennis: now, at 52, is having fun with padel, as the role of player but also of founding ambassador of **Padel Australia**. *“I first heard about padel about 15 years ago but thought nothing of it, I now wish I did start playing back then however about a year ago a good mate of mine was playing and told me I should give it a real go so I did – said in an interview to FIP –. I was pretty awful to start off with but quickly learnt the basics of it. I am very lucky to have a neighbour who has a Padel court where we live, Matt Barrelle who helped bring Padel to Australia is that man and I am lucky he was there for me to have access to his court. In Australia there are not many courts as of yet but the interests is coming”.*

Rafter likes padel so much: *“I really like the complexities of the game, it is a cross over between squash and tennis but as I am learning it is more important to have defensive skills than attacking ones and this is something I need to learn. I honestly thought I would just blow away a Padel player with strong volleys and smashes, no no no”.*

Padel is growing day by day in Australia, thanks also to Rafter and his popularity. *“I really am interested to see how the sport progresses. It's still in its infancy, I am keen to be involved to see if I can help the sport grow and possibly even invest in setting up a centre or two”.* Australian fans were also interested in last two tournaments, because they were so happy to watch again Rafter on court: will Pat play again on the **CUPRA FIP Tour**? *“I am keeping all my options open for where this sport takes me. Maybe I will play some veterans events for Australia, I really don't know just yet”.*

Switching from tennis to padel was difficult also for a former world number one: *“Everyone will have their strengths and weaknesses in padel. Tennis players are the majority of cross overs in Australia to this sport, trying to stop yourself playing tennis shots is a very difficult thing to unlearn, the easy ball in tennis is not necessarily the easy ball in padel. And then the defensive skills are tough, this thing I really need to learn and it will take time. The walls, spins and pace of ball are all tricky”.*

Like Rafter, many Australians are increasingly involved into the padel movement, which can grow again in the next years: *“Obviously the costs of setting up and renting courts here in Australia are issues that need to be addressed, but community is where I see the biggest benefit and growth for this sport. The approach is easier than tennis, racquet is shorter and the balls don’t bounce as much, movement is shorter and balls keep coming back to your feet, a lot to like about padel and lets see what happens in the next 10 years in Australia, I’m looking forward to seeing its growth”.*

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