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Focus on...France

Not only Roland Garros: a country in the world's Top 5 by number of clubs

Padel returns to **Roland Garros**. The 18th stage of the **Qatar Airways Premier Padel 2024**, the **Greenweez Paris Major**, is the second tournament on the circuit organised in France after the **Betclic Bordeaux P2**: the one in Paris is the third Major of the season after Doha and Rome, and before the one in November in **Acapulco** (Mexico).

The history of padel in France In France, padel appeared at the beginning of the 1990s: the **Fédération Française de padel** was founded in 1989 (but not recognised until three years later in 1992 by the Ministry of Sport), by former rugby players from the Paris Université Club, including the Baigts brothers, one of whom (Claude) was its president from 1992 to 2003. Also in 1992, France joined the FIP as an affiliate, participating in the first **FIP World Padel Championships** in Spain that year (taking part in all editions except that of 2014) and in the first edition of the **FIP European Padel Championships** in 1995 in Italy. In 2000, in Toulouse, France organised the first and only world championship in one of the most beautiful squares in the world, the **Place du Capitole**, while in 2003 it hosted the European Championships in **Aix en Provence**. In 2012, at the 11th edition of the FIP World Padel Championships in Mexico, the Bleus won their first bronze medal in the women's tournament and, in the same year, the governance of padel passed to Ligue National de Padel, which ran it until 2014 when the historic **Fédération Française de Tennis** (FFT, founded in 1888) was granted delegated powers by the **French Ministry of Sport**. In 2015, France triumphed in the men's tournament of the FIP European Padel Championships in the Netherlands; a title that was repeated by the women in 2019 in Italy. In 2022, in the last edition of the FIP World Padel Championships in Dubai, finally came a bronze for the men's national team.

The numbers of padel in France In the last four years, there has been a huge growth of padel in France: it has gone from around 1,000 courts in 2020 to more than 2,500 today, spread over 940 facilities, making **France** the fifth largest country in the world in terms of number of clubs after **Spain, Italy, Argentina** and **Sweden**. The number of amateur players is steadily increasing and is over 500,000, with a steadily rising trend over the next three years, according to estimates by the **FIP Research & Data Analysis Department**. The FFT numbers also certify this boom with 740 affiliated clubs and 65,000 padel cards (+91% compared to 2023 – FFT data updated to May 2024) but, if we also consider the multisport licences that have increased significantly in

the last two years, estimates say there are 130/140,000 licences allocated mainly to padel players. In the FIP ranking, there are 90 French players with points (60 in the men's category and 30 in the women's). In the men's category, the best ranked is **Thomas Leygue** (born in 2001), number 107 and recent winner of the FIP Rise in Mol (Belgium). At number 122 is **Dylan Guichard** (born in 2000), followed at number 129 by veteran **Maxime Moreau** (born in 1987). There are three women in the Top 100 of the women's FIP ranking: the queen is **Alix Collombon** (1993), number 32 and for years one of the few non-Spanish Europeans at the top of world padel and winner in July of the FIP Gold in Saltillo (Mexico). She is followed, at number 57, by **Lea Godallier** (1995), who, paired with Collombon, became French champion a few weeks ago; then **Carla Touly** (97), who won the FIP Rise Box to Box in Bandol in August at home, paired with compatriot **Jessica Ginier Barbier** (112).

Tournaments in France In terms of organising FIP-recognised international tournaments in France, to date there have been four **Premier Padel** events (Paris Major 2022, 2023, 2024 and the Bordeaux P2 2024) and seven on the **CUPRA FIP Tour** of which six are men's and one combined, the recent FIP Rise Box to Box. In November 2019, one of the first **FIP Tour** tournaments in history was held in France: the **FIP Rise Angers**, which saw the victory of local pair **Scatena-Bergeron**.

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