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## FIP RISE Australian Open, legend Pat Rafter makes his padel debut

Scrolling down the entry list of the **FIP RISE Australian Open**, the tournament that opens the **CUPRA FIP Tour 2024**, there is one name on line 12 that stands out more than the others. **Patrick Rafter**. Yes, him, the tennis legend, winner of two **US Open** editions in a row (1997 and 1998) and protagonist of two finals at **Wimbledon**, one of them memorable played on Monday and lost 9-7 in the fifth set against **Goran Ivanisevic**. And while the Croatian is in Australia following Novak Djokovic, Rafter – now 51 years old – is ready to debut with padel. Sydney will host the tournament, with Rafter – who obviously has no FIP ranking points – playing alongside compatriot **Luke Morland**, who has two points and is world number 954. But you can be sure, the crowd will be all for them.

Rafter, having ended his competitive career – among his successes, also the Davis Cup in 1999, the year in which he became number 1 in the ATP ranking for a week –, lives far from the cameras: searching on social networks, there are no Instagram profiles linked to his name, just as rare have been the interviews he has given. Unforgettable, however, are his attacking game, his serve and volley (which he could use in padel) and even the sunscreen applied under his eyes and on his nose. The curiosity to see him at work in padel is enormous, and he won't be the first tennis player to reach the bottom of a Slam to try his hand with the pala: it has already happened with polish **Jerzy Janowicz**, semi-finalist at Wimbledon in 2013 and a regular on the FIP padel circuit. Now it is Rafter's turn.

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