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Pat Rafter founding ambassador of Padel Australia Melisi's fairytale: "I can say I beat him"

*"I can say I beat **Pat Rafter** at the Australian Open. But I won't say it was padel...". Andrea **Melisi**, an Italian who has been living in **Sydney** for a year and three months, jokes about it. Paired with Australian **Timothy Brown**, Melisi had a once-in-a-lifetime experience: he found himself on the other side of the court with a tennis legend like Rafter, and gave him four games (6-2 6-2), qualifying for the second round of the **FIP RISE Australian Open** and going on to further his tournament after also making it through the round of 16 a few hours later. "Pat Rafter is a beginner with padel, but he's a good player – he said. The smash and volleys are the ones we all remember: if he plays six months, he'll beat us all".*

A unique experience, obviously: *"When we heard he was going to play this tournament we were all excited, imagine having him as an opponent in the draw. On the draw it was 'Patrick Rafter' and I said to myself, 'Is that really him? I always called him Pat'. Rafter and Lleyton Hewitt are living monuments in Australia".* Not only that: **Rafter** was recently appointed as a founding ambassador of **Padel Australia** directly by Tennis Australia, the Australian tennis federation. *"I am really looking forward to joining up with Padel Australia and to help spread the word of a game I really enjoy playing. I will compete in a few events back here in Australia and who knows where it will take me",* said Rafter, who will play in **Melbourne** next week in a **FIP PROMOTION** that will be the second stage of the **CUPRA FIP Tour 2024**.

Melisi, who was born in Brescia – in the north of Italy –, was a good tennis player at junior level before leaving for Australia, also facing **Jannik Sinner** and risking to win a set. *"The level was very high and the activity just as expensive, so I felt the need to change and took the path to become a master. I now work as a High Performance Coach at the Voyager Tennis Academy, in the sports centre that is currently hosting the United Cup of Tennis. The idea is to combine tennis and padel".* But Melisi's relationship with padel is growing stronger and stronger: *"At the beginning, I experienced it as a way to escape from the stress of tennis, but as time went by, I started to experience it more and more as a sport, also because it enhances my characteristics: in tennis I never had a great serve, but I have always been a fast player. I am trying to play some tournaments here in Australia or Asia to get ranking points".*

Padel is growing in **Australia**: *"Until last year there were only two clubs with a total of four courts. Now, in the sports centre alone, where the FIP RISE Australian Open is being played, there are 10 courts, and also in Australia a PROMOTION will be played in Melbourne in the next few days. In this tournament the level is very good: players from Spain, Argentina, Japan*

and the number 1 seed pair (Manuel Vives and Julien Seurin, ed.) are French. Then if Rafter continued to play, it would be further spot for padel". And Andrea, Rafter, beat him.

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