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Focus on...Argentina

Courts, events, legends: padel is a social phenomenon

Padel was invented in Mexico, but the first **South American** country in which it had a very strong expansion was **Argentina**, which now hosts the **Mar del Plata Premier Padel P1**, the eighth stage of the professional circuit governed by the FIP. And it was precisely at the Ocean Club in Mar del Plata that the first padel courts in Argentina were installed, followed by others in accommodation facilities and private houses. It was in 1982 that padel began to become a 'social phenomenon'. According to records, in 1987 the **Asociación Platense de Padel** (APPTAS) was created, the first official padel-related institutional organisation; the following year, a group of friends led by **Oscar 'Cacho' Nicastro** founded the **Argentina Padel Association** (APA), the first national padel association in the world.

It was the APA, together with the Spanish and Uruguayan federations, that founded the **International Padel Federation** in July 1991, leading padel to quickly become one of the first sports in Argentina. According to data from the **FIP Research & Data Analysis Department**, today there are an estimated 7,000 padel courts, distributed among more than 3,000 clubs (of which 530 are affiliated with the **APA**) and facilities, and one and a half million practising players (8,700 of whom have professional licences).

Argentina has made the history of the sport not only because it was one of the first countries where it was practised, but above all because of its sporting palmares and because it gave birth to the greatest padel legends. In terms of national teams, Argentina has won 11 **FIP World Padel Championships** at men's level and 8 at women's level, and in all the editions it has participated in (16) it has always reached the final. In addition to these, there are also three gold medals at the **FIP Juniors World Padel Championships** and the men's gold medal at the last **FIP Seniors World Padel Championships** in **La Nucía**. Padel legends include **Robi Gattiker** and **Ale Lasaigues**, through to the dominating players of the 2000s **Fernando Belasteguín** and **Juan Martín Díaz**, and up to the present day with **Agustín Tapia**. Among women, multiple world champions **Cecilia Baccigalupo** and **Paula Eyheraguibel** made history. The same one that **Delfina Brea** is trying to write in Premier Padel.

Among the international FIP events, five **FIP Rise** (including one 'combined') have been played in Argentina so far, related to the **CUPRA FIP Tour**; the one in **Mar del Plata** will be the first 'combined' of the **Premier Padel** circuit, after the two men's tournaments played in 2022 and 2023 in **Mendoza**. There have been 82 international FIP circuit tournaments

victories to date (22 **Premier Padel** and 60 **CUPRA FIP Tour**) with the presence of at least one Argentinian player, of which 62 in the men's category and 20 in the women's.

In the **FIP ranking** for 2023, 285 Argentines were present in the men's ranking, including 17 Top 100; 45 Argentines were present in the women's FIP ranking, with 5 Top 100.

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