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FIP European Padel Championships: Steffie Weterings, the gentle warrior from the Netherlands: "Love at first sight with padel"

A gentle warrior. **Steffie Weterings** is one of the **Netherlands'** star players at the **FIP European Padel Championships** in **Cagliari** and one of the most popular players in the FIP and Premier Padel circuits. She discovered her passion only a few years ago while she was still playing tennis. *"I was at a club near my home, and there were padel courts in the same facility. The friend I was with asked me to try - she recalls. I wasn't sure, but at that moment, there was a group of former Ajax footballers playing who insisted that I give it a go. It was a good thing because I had so much fun that I thought, 'okay, let's continue, let's play more, maybe even some tournaments.' From there, I reached the Dutch championships, and the national team coach saw me and invited me to participate in the European Championships in Marbella four years ago."*

ROLE MODELS The rest is history: after winning several tournaments in the **CUPRA FIP Tour**, Steffie regularly joined the **Premier Padel** circuit and is steadily in the top 100 of the **FIP ranking**. *"We still have many tournaments this year in both circuits, but I'm particularly looking forward to Roland Garros," she continues. "And of course, there are the World Championships in Qatar at the end of October. I want to play as much as possible and improve my ranking, but I also want to have fun."* Regarding the colleagues she admires most, Weterings names three: *"I really like **Carolina Orsi**: how she plays, how she is on the court, her style. Then **Gemma Triay**, a player of great class and strength. And the number one, **Ari Sanchez**. Among the guys? Definitely **Ale Galan**: he's an incredible player, dominating the tournaments, and it's a pleasure to watch him play, but I must admit I also like him for his looks!"*

THE FUTURE OF THE DISCIPLINE She sees Spain still leading the way but predicts other teams will become increasingly strong in the coming years: *"Italy, France, and Portugal, along with the Spanish, will be the top 4 teams, with Italy slightly ahead of the others."*

LOOK With over 25,000 followers on Instagram, the Dutch player is one of the most followed on social networks, where she has also become popular due to her style and tattoos. Steffie talks about her favorite tattoos: *"This one on my left forearm is an elephant and one of my favorites: it symbolizes loyalty and trust, values I feel I have. Then I have one on my abdomen, a dreamcatcher, because deep down, I am a bit of a dreamer. And another one on the side, also on my abdomen, which I got for my dog Dushi, who passed away last April. I dedicated a tattoo with the letters of his name; it's my way of remembering him after a loss that was very painful for me. Now, little by little, I'm combining all the ones I have, creating a kind of puzzle."*

PADEL IN THE NETHERLANDS Steffie then talks about the growing popularity of padel in the Netherlands: *"It started to spread during the pandemic: people could play on outdoor courts, and many former football players also played and shared their performances on social networks."*

It quickly became popular because indoor activities weren't allowed, but the growth continued even after. Even today, many courts are being built: I think people like it so much because it's a fast-paced, fun sport to play. Even in the 'clinics' I do, I notice that even business people today prefer padel. Once, they only played golf."

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