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World Tennis Gazette

The World's Most Dashing (and Only)

DAILY

Tennis Magazine

How France's QUOTIDIEN Mixes Offbeat Humor, Glitzy Graphics In a Nightly Drama to Serve Fans

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By JOHN MARTIN

PARIS — When the guillotine blade struck, Justine Henin's head did not move.

Instead, her smiling face (minus her chin) suddenly appeared on a computer screen drenched in vivid blues and blacks.

It was a year ago and Henin was the world's top-ranked women's tennis player. Two clicks later, her body rejoined her head and the execution was complete.

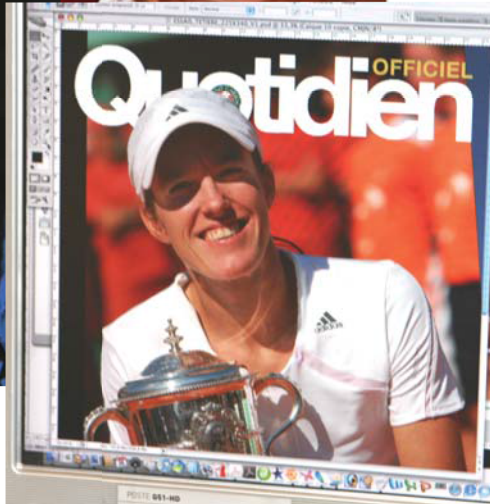
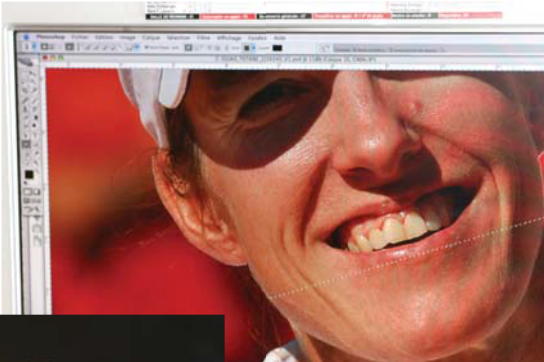
Today, Henin is gone, retired after a career she cut short at age 25. But her tormentor, an art director and designer named Herve Casey, is back for duty at this year's French Open, a championship first played 117 years ago.

Instead of an executioner's hood, Casey wears spectacles. Last year he sat at a computer in a darkened room on the Rue Lauriston, which housed Gestapo headquarters during the Nazi occupation of France during World War II. This year, his offices have moved out of history's torture zone to a nearby neighborhood.

Casey creates his digital beheadings for a purpose: to insert



a word behind tennis players' heads or hands on the cover of a glossy magazine. The word is *Quotidien*, which means *daily* in French. No tennis magazine in the world lives up to its title in so re-



markable a fashion.

In a direct way, *Quotidien* reflects France's madcap love affair with tennis, a sport

which first appeared here as Royal Court tennis in the 13th Century.

Much of what happens in French tennis today stems from its vast network of tennis clubs (about 8,500), and 1,100,000 licensed players, many competing in 36 tennis leagues. In a population of nearly 64 million people, tennis ranks easily beside soccer, rugby, and basketball in its broad popularity.

The French take special delight in visualizing tennis. Year after year, French television producers and tennis federation patrons assign painters and graphic artists to capture the swirl of color and speed at Roland Garros, the citadel of the sport

This year, the adoration of Rene Lacoste, the 1920-30s French champion, inventor, and clothing designer, reaches a peak in a six-month-long tribute.

What sets the magazine *Quotidien* apart from its competitors at Wimbledon, Australia, and the U.S. Open are its fresh stories and high-

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COVER-AGE: Splashed across *Quotidien's* covers as they fight for a day's acclaim, stars of the 2007 French Open, from left Roger Federer, Maria Sharapova, Marion Bartoli, Gael Monfils, Richard Gasquet, Carlos Moya, and Anna Ivanovic.

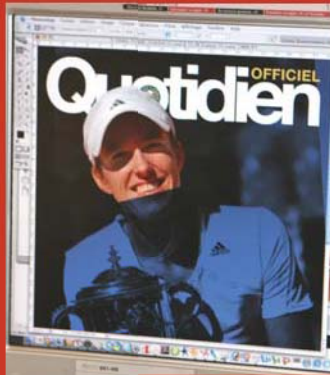
How Executioner Does It: Digital Beheading for a Signature Cover



STEP 1: Editor pulls up photo of Henin, marks nearly invisible electronic line on her chin, then slices it.



STEP 2: Minus a chin, Henin's head floats in sea of blacks, blues.



STEP 3: With a click, editor inserts magazine's title in space behind her head.



STEP 4: Henin's head rejoins her body in full color as background reappears.

Mixing Tennis Facts, Digital Feats with 'Improbable Interviews'

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gloss graphics each day. In Melbourne, Wimbledon, or Flushing Meadows, customers buy glossy magazines written and produced days or weeks in advance.

In Paris, by contrast, *Quotidien* vaults over the turnstiles every morning for 15 days and treats what it finds as the most glamorous sporting event in the world. Each night, editors replace as much as 32 of *Quotidien's* 48 pages.

The result astonishes its competitors.

"So hard to believe this gets done from scratch day after day," said Adam Scharf, who helps publish the U.S. Open's tournament magazine.

Quotidien's daily cover photo often transforms a sometimes sweaty, struggling player into a glamorous figure.

Inside, the magazine writes about everybody on the grounds, humanizing players, referees, fans, ballkids, coaches, Beautiful People, trainers, groundskeepers, even gatekeepers.

One day, Serena Williams of the United States graces the cover. She leans forward in attack mode. "Return of the Woman" reads the cover headline. In an interview inside she is called "The Serene Force".

Quotidien's editors concede they are not publishing hard-hitting journalism.

"We can't write something bad about a player," said Phillippe Fages, the maestro of the nightly editing process. "We can't say she (a competitor) is not playing well. But we can point out that she is struggling."

Fages is the French Tennis Federation's editorial conscience on the staff. For the two weeks of competition, *Quotidien* is the official voice of French tennis, which hasn't produced a French grand slam champion since Francoise Durr in 1967 and Yannick Noah in 1983. (Yes, Mary Pearce, a transplanted



Editor
Taoussi

Canadian and American resident, won in 2000).

Still, last July, a Frenchwoman, Marion Bartoli, reached the women's final at Wimbledon. In January, a Frenchman, Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, reached the men's final in Melbourne, where 16 players in the men's draw were from France (15 from the U.S., 13 from Spain).

"We have to talk (editorially) to the federation, its members, its board, the staffs, as well as the public," Fages said.

The conversation begins each day in an L-shaped office in the basement of Suzanne Lenglen Stadium.

In late morning, as players scramble for forehands nearby, Mustapha Taoussi, the editor in chief, assigns stories. He sends a junior writer to find a spectator to pose a question for a favorite tennis personality. He

encourages a senior writer to begin his daily task of concocting make-believe conversations. His column is called "The Improbable Interviews".

Improbable — and impossible. This year, the senior *Quotidien* writer, Benoit Bouchet, "interviewed" Suzanne Lenglen (1899-1938). She told him she was already world champion when much younger (15) than the current French sensation (Alize Cornet, who is 18), dressed in a daring manner (she wore the first knee-length tennis dresses), and, with great foresight, said she felt she deserved a stadium in her honor.

In some ways, the magazine specializes in making the improbable entertaining to the blasé and the diehard alike.

Most issues contain a playful photo composite, sometimes called "The Ideal Player": Carlos Moya's head and right arm ("73% points won on first serve"), Jonas Bjorkman's right leg and foot ("9 service breaks"), and Novak Djokovic's left arm

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Richard Osborn
Editor: John Martin

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The Daily Show: From Courtside to Editors to Readers

STORYMAKER: When Rafael Nadal hits shot, photo and story go to *Quotidien* office beneath Suzanne Lenglen Stadium at Roland Garros.



ANONYMITY: Behind unmarked door, left, inside Suzanne Lenglen Stadium, the magazine's staff, including Benoit Bouchet, above, who writes imaginary interviews, sends stories to graphic design agency, left, in nearby Paris office.



DIGITAL DUNGEON: Editor Fages, top, and Designer Casey, below left, with Editor Chanoine toil over pages, adjusting photos, rewriting copy, then transmitting pages to a printing plant in the suburbs, at right.



DAWN PATROL: Struggling with a balky press, printers sometimes labor past sunrise to produce a fresh, glossy tennis magazine for *Quotidien's* daily readers, below, who look for themselves.



Nightly Grind: Searching for Photos, Words from Day's Tennis Action



RIGHT NOW: Emmanuel Poulain urges colleagues to complete two pages.



PAUSE Printer locks page on press.



PRESS RUN: Printer adjusts conveyor as Henin heads to binding and morning delivery.

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and leg ("79 minutes for one set.")
A reporter straps a pedometer on a press center runner who covers 10.8 miles in a day, a magazine distributor (5.5 miles), and a photographer (4.9 miles). Beside his or her photo, each answers a question and wins a moment of fame.

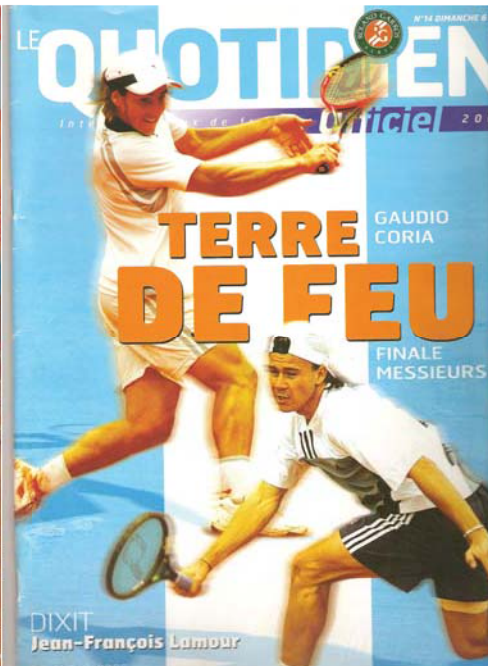
The Already Famous talk: A French comedian who impersonates prime ministers explains why he likes tennis, an international soccer star calls tennis a great discipline.
By late afternoon, headlines, stories and pictures are heading out the door (digitally) toward the graphics design agency a few miles away.
There, Casey is slicing off the head of still another player for the next day's cover.

In this year's first issue, he deftly severed Gustavo Kuersten's left hand to insert the magazine title behind it. The Brazilian was making his final appearance at Roland Garros. The headline: "Last Samba in Paris."
By early evening, Fages is crossing out paragraphs. Nothing is sacred.
"He's the Pope," said Phillippe Chanoine, a jolly sub-editor who often types Fages' replacement sentences directly into copy blocks. "He's the shepherd," insists Franck Lehodey, a sketch artist and headline writer.
At 10:40 p.m. Emmanuel Poulain, a young editorial expeditor, leans forward. "We need these two pages," he says urgently to Chanoine. Nothing happens. Editing drags on past midnight.
Finally, about 4 a.m., at a printing plant in Villiers-le-Bel, a sleepy district on the outskirts of Paris, press operators fix a series of mechanical glitches. Copies of *Quotidien* begin spitting out.

Henin's image floats past. Roger Federer streaks by in coat and tie. A conveyor moves copies to a collection point. A woman in a white lab coat wraps bundles in plastic.

At 6:08 a.m., Poulain begins stacking the day's 16,000 copies on pallets. The first 4,000 are extra, marked for French tennis club presidents invited to the tournament that day. Federation members get copies for free; spectators pay 4 Euros (\$6.18).

By 10:30 a.m., bundles are reaching kiosks at Roland Garros. As play starts at 11, spectators, players, and workers are scanning its pages.
Amid smiles and exhaustion, a new day begins for the world's most dashing (and only) daily tennis magazine.



MATCHUPS: Covers on final Sundays of the French Open in 2007, left, and in 2004.