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LOOKING BACK: Australia Tackled A Loss of Normal To Crown World's Tennis Champs

Editorial

MELBOURNE (VIA SAN DIEGO) — In its 125th year since inception, the Australian tennis championship opened this year's edition pondering a loss of normal.

The tournament's main draws were filled with dozens of qualifiers funneled 7,460 miles by air from Doha and Qatar in the Middle East.

On the grounds at Melbourne Park, reporters and photographers were ordered to carry masks, social distance, sign health credentials or stay home if not feeling well.

Each day as the competition unfolded, spectators found themselves divided in thirds as they entered the grounds, a 21st Century precaution against spreading plague.

If you were looking for a metaphorical expression to explain how fans and players were feeling about all this, you could re-



WHAT'S NEXT? Rafael Nadal of Spain clipped a passing ball as he practiced before the opening round, worried by his back pains.



Craig Tiley

cruit Rafael Nadal to describe what a slightly serious backache was beginning to do to his thoughts as he approached his first-round match:

"It's not the ideal situation to start a match with problems," Nadal told reporters. "The only thing I can do is stay positive, work on the recover, do all the things I can, then hope the situation will be improving."

The same might be said by Craig Tiley, the talented business executive disguised as an Australian tennis organizer with a reputation for coming up with gifted solutions that favor all players with travel grants, expenses, and steadily rising prize money, especially for the less successful players.

"Stay positive and keep working," is what most people might expect to hear Tiley say.

After defeating his first-round opponent in straight sets, Nadal declared "I am still alive!"

One day at a time, he seemed to be vowing to himself. By tournament's end, Nadal was gone but Novak Djokovic had won his 18th major championship and Tiley had led the Australians to a triumph over a new kind of adversity.

The way the 2021 Australian Open was carefully drawn across the globe at a time of pandemic terror displayed an amazing grace. — **John Martin, Editor**