

European Junior Championships 18 & under

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The man who showed Federer the limits

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There are defeats a tennis player won't ever forget. Because they were particularly bitter, or because they hurt a lot or maybe because they started or increased a process. This is true even for someone like Roger Federer. The final in Wimbledon 2008 versus Rafael Nadal for instance or the final in Rome 2006 versus the same player and some more. Definitely included in the list is a match in Washington D.C. in August 1999 versus Bjorn Phau.

The German was ranked number 407 and seemingly an easy prey for the junior world champion from Switzerland, at the time number 104 in the world. However, players fear the event in the american capital because of heat and humidity and Phau easily won 62 63. Those were the times when Federer occasionally would still lose matches under extreme weather conditions, something which wouldn't happen later after he moved to Dubai. «In that match versus Phau I was finished after five games», he later recalled in an interview. An american tennis website still lists this match as his worst loss ever.

His conqueror looks back on that day for us: «I played well and Roger was still far from being the Roger that we would get used to later.» Phau is

standing next to the referee's house in the Sportzentrum, he is in Klosters as coach for the german boys. He retired some five years ago and the win against Federer is one of the highlights of his career, but it can't beat the victory 2006 in Dubai versus Andre Agassi. «He was in his last year but still strong.» Phau got the biggest possible compliment from the man from Las Vegas himself: «Bjorn is the fastest player on tour.»

Not only do the stars of the future serve aces in Klosters but also the top players of the past are there to coach them. Also this year, one could field a

competitive lineup for the Swiss team championships coached maybe by Stéphanie Foretz, who won the European title in Klosters in 1999 and who now is responsible for the french girls. Phau would have a spot in the team for sure as would former Top Ten crack Jiri Novak (Czech Republic), the Swiss Yves Allegro (Olympic games 2004) and Marco Chiudinelli (Davis Cup champion) and Olivier Delaitre from France, a former world number 3 in doubles. Also in the squad would be Portuguese Emanuel Couto and Italian Giorgio Galimberti. And definitely the list isn't complete.



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