

Jonathan Agnew



I am really looking forward to my annual pilgrimage to Wimbledon next week. Sadly, unlike my Test Match Special sparring partner Phil Tufnell, I will not be schmoozing it up in the Royal Box that very same day (just how HAS he managed that?) but I am consoling myself with the fact that

Wimbledon is as much about wandering through the outside courts and getting close to some of the young, developing players as it is quaffing the finest Champagne amongst Royalty.

The sight of Tuffers reclining in the Royal Box will not be the only startling change at Wimbledon this summer.

For the first time in decades the familiar, tiresome headlines about British failure can be cast aside. No more: 'It's been 75 years since we had a male winner'. And the occupant of Number 10 the last time a British man won Wimbledon is no longer Stanley Baldwin. This year we have the defending champion.

And I would love to know if that forces a change within Andy Murray. Will it be easier returning to Wimbledon as the champion, or as previously when the pressure was all about the expectation of finally breaking Britain's rotten record there? I don't suppose he will be too traumatised about his early departure from Queen's Club in the traditional build up because that will allow him more time to prepare with his new coach, Amélie Mauresmo.

Hers was a fascinating appointment that nobody saw coming. I

interviewed Andy's mum, Judy, just before the announcement and tried to dig for information. 'All I can say', she replied, 'is I haven't yet seen the name in any of the papers yet'.

Perhaps I should have read more into Judy's choice of the word 'the' rather than 'his'. Of course it is an interesting development for Murray to prefer a female coach. Judy has been a very strong influence throughout his life, but also it is possible that Murray needed a complete change in character from Mauresmo's predecessor, Ivan Lendl who transformed Murray into a winner, focussed his mind on court but was essentially humourless, intense and quickly tired of the travel and commitment.

Mauresmo has proven qualities in grass court play, particularly volleying and slicing the ball, which critics say are areas in which Murray needs to improve.

The Murray/Mauresmo partnership is on trial for now, but they will both be fiercely determined to make the controversial appointment a success.

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