# Clare Balding warns of mental hurdles for Jack Draper amid Wimbledon pressure



BBC presenter Clare Balding has highlighted the unique challenges facing Jack Draper as he prepares to compete at Wimbledon, cautioning that the pressure on British players at their home Grand Slam makes success more difficult despite the strong support of the crowd. Draper, 23, is set to enter the tournament as the fourth seed, bolstered by his breakthrough achievements in 2025, including winning the Indian Wells Masters — his first ATP Masters 1000 title — and reaching the semi-finals of the previous US Open. His opening match is against Argentine Sebastian Baez, and his path through the draw could see him face some of the sport’s toughest competitors, including Novak Djokovic, Jannik Sinner, and Carlos Alcaraz.

Balding emphasises that while Draper has shown he is capable of winning Grand Slams, the psychological demands of playing Wimbledon as a British player add an extra layer of complexity. “It’s why Andy Murray’s even more remarkable,” she remarked at a London event marking the first anniversary of Barclays’ Free Park Tennis initiative, which aims to widen tennis participation by providing free access and coaching. Balding points out the intense media attention and internal pressures that come with performing at home, describing these as significant mental hurdles in addition to the physical challenges of elite tennis. She also notes that Murray’s success partly stemmed from access through family support, underlining the importance of initiatives that lower entry barriers, as over 35,000 children have benefited from Free Park Tennis to date.

Draper’s rise is echoed in his recent tennis performances. After ending last season ranked just outside the top 15, he has catapulted into a top-four seeding for Wimbledon following key victories, including winning Indian Wells decisively and advancing to the finals in Madrid. Recently, his run to the semi-finals at Queen’s Club further solidified his credentials, helping him leapfrog other contenders like Taylor Fritz in the ATP rankings. Draper’s game features an imposing left-handed serve and a forehand that draws comparisons to Rafael Nadal’s power and precision, marking him as a threatening force on grass. With the retirement of Andy Murray, the British public and media pin high expectations on Draper, who has reportedly been using a breathing coach to manage the spotlight and maintain focus under pressure. Figures such as former champion John McEnroe and Murray himself have expressed confidence in Draper’s ability to thrive on this big stage.

The 2025 Wimbledon tournament promises to be fiercely contested, with reigning champions and top-ranked players adding to the stakes. Carlos Alcaraz is aiming to win a third straight Wimbledon title, a feat only a handful of men have achieved in the Open Era. Currently ranked world number two, Alcaraz has been in formidable form on grass with a strong 29-3 record this season and a recent Queen’s Club win. Jannik Sinner, the top seed this year, arrives motivated but under pressure after a difficult French Open final and a shaky grass season. Novak Djokovic, at 38 years old, is chasing a record 25th Grand Slam title and aiming to equal Roger Federer’s Wimbledon wins tally, despite an interrupted season. Other notable contenders include Alexander Zverev, Taylor Fritz, Daniil Medvedev, and Alexander Bublik, all seeking to challenge the dominance of Alcaraz and Sinner.

Wimbledon also stands out for its significant British presence, with 23 British players competing in singles — the largest since 1984 — which highlights the renewed strength of tennis in the UK. Draper, as the leading male British hope, faces a daunting draw that could include encounters with former Grand Slam winners and top-ranked adversaries. The women’s singles draw is equally competitive, with reigning women's champion Barbora Krejcikova returning from injury and top seeds facing tough qualifiers early on, underscoring the overall depth of talent at this prestigious event.

Despite the fierce competition, there is a palpable optimism surrounding Draper’s chances, blending his recent on-court successes with an awareness of the distinctive psychological battle that British players face at Wimbledon. The tournament may represent both an extraordinary challenge and a historic opportunity for Draper, who carries the hopes of a nation eager to see its next tennis star emerge. The combination of his physical prowess, mental preparation, and supportive initiatives at the grassroots level paint a promising picture for British tennis’s future.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/jack-draper-wimbledon-clare-balding-grand-slam-argentine-b2778423.html), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/alcaraz-faces-fognini-wimbledon-treble-bid-starts-sabalenka-meets-qualifier-2025-06-27/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/jack-draper-wimbledon-clare-balding-grand-slam-argentine-b2778423.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/draper-ready-wimbledon-spotlight-great-british-hope-2025-06-26/), [[5]](https://www.tennismajors.com/atp/british-wimbledon-nextgen-everything-you-always-wanted-to-know-about-jack-draper-but-never-had-time-to-find-out-640767.html), [[6]](https://www.tennis365.com/tennis-news/jack-draper-rankings-jump-queens-club-wimbledon-seeding), [[7]](https://www.atptour.com/en/news/draper-nakashima-london-2025-friday)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/alcaraz-seeks-wimbledon-hat-trick-sinner-djokovic-plot-dethroning-2025-06-27/), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/alcaraz-faces-fognini-wimbledon-treble-bid-starts-sabalenka-meets-qualifier-2025-06-27/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/alcaraz-faces-fognini-wimbledon-treble-bid-starts-sabalenka-meets-qualifier-2025-06-27/), [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/jack-draper-wimbledon-clare-balding-grand-slam-argentine-b2778423.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/jack-draper-wimbledon-clare-balding-grand-slam-argentine-b2778423.html), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/draper-ready-wimbledon-spotlight-great-british-hope-2025-06-26/), [[5]](https://www.tennismajors.com/atp/british-wimbledon-nextgen-everything-you-always-wanted-to-know-about-jack-draper-but-never-had-time-to-find-out-640767.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/jack-draper-wimbledon-clare-balding-grand-slam-argentine-b2778423.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/draper-ready-wimbledon-spotlight-great-british-hope-2025-06-26/> - Jack Draper enters Wimbledon 2025 as Britain's new tennis hope, taking centre stage following Andy Murray's retirement. Previously winning only two matches at Wimbledon, the 23-year-old has transformed dramatically over the past year. Draper ended last season ranked 15th after a notable U.S. Open semi-final run and has since won at Indian Wells and reached the Madrid final. Now the tournament's fourth seed, he is lauded for his improved physical strength, a strong left-handed serve, and a powerful forehand comparable to Rafael Nadal's. Having reached the semi-finals at Queen's Club recently, Draper faces immense public and media pressure akin to past British stars like Murray and Henman. With support from a breathing coach to manage stress and high expectations, Draper appears mentally prepared. Former champion John McEnroe and Andy Murray express confidence in Draper's ability to handle the spotlight and challenge for the title. Widely viewed as a formidable contender, Draper embraces his role with optimism and determination as Wimbledon approaches.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/alcaraz-seeks-wimbledon-hat-trick-sinner-djokovic-plot-dethroning-2025-06-27/> - Carlos Alcaraz is aiming for a third consecutive Wimbledon title, seeking to cement his position as men's tennis' new dominant force after a thrilling French Open win against top rival Jannik Sinner. Alcaraz has impressed with his adaptation to grass, boasting a 29-3 win-loss record and recently securing the Queen’s Club title. Should he succeed at Wimbledon, 22-year-old Alcaraz would become only the fifth man in the Open Era to win three straight titles at the tournament. Meanwhile, Sinner, the current world number one recovering from a tough loss in Paris and a shaky grass season, arrives under pressure but motivated. Novak Djokovic, aged 38, eyes a record 25th Grand Slam and hopes to equal Roger Federer's eight Wimbledon titles despite a subdued 2025 and no warm-up events. British hopes rest on Jack Draper during his home slam post-Andy Murray’s retirement. Contenders like Alexander Zverev, Taylor Fritz, Daniil Medvedev, and Alexander Bublik aim to break the Alcaraz-Sinner stronghold. With several major players vying for glory, the upcoming Wimbledon tournament promises high-stakes rivalries and potential historic milestones.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/alcaraz-faces-fognini-wimbledon-treble-bid-starts-sabalenka-meets-qualifier-2025-06-27/> - Carlos Alcaraz begins his pursuit of a third consecutive Wimbledon title against experienced Italian Fabio Fognini, while women's top seed Aryna Sabalenka faces Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine. The tournament draw revealed several intriguing matchups. Men's top seed Jannik Sinner plays compatriot Luca Nardi, and Novak Djokovic, aiming to tie Roger Federer's eight-title record, opens against France’s Alexandre Muller. Women's defending champion Barbora Krejcikova, returning from a thigh strain, faces Alexandra Eala. Notable women's matchups include Coco Gauff vs. Dayana Yastremska and Jessica Pegula against Elisabetta Cocciaretto. Fourth seed Jasmine Paolini meets Anastasija Sevastova and could face Sabalenka in the semifinals. For Britain, 23 players are in singles competition, the highest since 1984. Jack Draper, Britain's top male hope, has a challenging path with potential matchups including Marin Cilic, Alexander Bublik, Djokovic, Sinner, and Alcaraz. Emma Raducanu faces British teen Mimi Xu and might meet Marketa Vondrousova or McCartney Kessler in round two. Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen could face Naomi Osaka in round two. Alcaraz, fresh from a Queen's Club win, could see Alexander Zverev in the semifinals. Alcaraz opens Centre Court play Monday; Krejcikova starts Tuesday.
5. <https://www.tennismajors.com/atp/british-wimbledon-nextgen-everything-you-always-wanted-to-know-about-jack-draper-but-never-had-time-to-find-out-640767.html> - Jack Draper has emerged as a prominent figure in British tennis, achieving significant milestones in 2025. At the Indian Wells tournament, he secured his first ATP Masters 1000 title by defeating Holger Rune in the final with a score of 6-2, 6-2. This victory marked Draper's third ATP Tour title and propelled him into the top 10 of the ATP rankings. Prior to this, Draper reached the semi-finals at the 2024 US Open, showcasing his potential on the Grand Slam stage. His performance at the Australian Open in 2025 further solidified his rising status, where he advanced to the fourth round after winning three consecutive five-set matches. Despite a subsequent early exit at the Miami Open, Draper's achievements have positioned him as a leading contender in the tennis world.
6. <https://www.tennis365.com/tennis-news/jack-draper-rankings-jump-queens-club-wimbledon-seeding> - Jack Draper has achieved a significant rankings jump following his performance at the 2025 Queen’s Club Championships. The British star secured a hard-fought three-set victory against world No. 32 Brandon Nakashima in the quarter-finals, with a score of 6-4, 5-7, 6-4. This win propelled Draper to the world No. 4 position in the Live ATP Rankings, moving 15 points clear of American Taylor Fritz. As a result, Draper is guaranteed to be seeded fourth at the 2025 Wimbledon Championships, surpassing Fritz, who lost in the opening round at Queen’s. This seeding reflects Draper's rising prominence in the tennis world and sets the stage for his performance at Wimbledon.
7. <https://www.atptour.com/en/news/draper-nakashima-london-2025-friday> - Jack Draper has advanced to the semi-finals of the 2025 Queen’s Club Championships, marking his first appearance at this stage in the tournament. In the quarter-finals, Draper faced Brandon Nakashima, securing a 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 victory. Reflecting on his achievement, Draper expressed pride in his progress, stating, "I was at Wimbledon last year ranked No. [28]. To go there at fourth seed is a testament to all the hard work me and my team have done, so I’m proud of that." This performance not only highlights Draper's growth but also positions him as a strong contender for the upcoming Wimbledon Championships.