# French Open crowd hostility sparks player outrage and new alcohol ban



The atmosphere at the French Open has increasingly drawn criticism for its hostility and rowdy behaviour, sparking concerns over the treatment of players in a sport traditionally esteemed for its decorum. One of the most notable participants to voice this discontent is Belgian player David Goffin, who, after overcoming a challenging five-set match against local favourite Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, lamented the increasingly unruly nature of the crowd. Goffin remarked that the environment is "becoming like football," suggesting that unfettered enthusiasm might give way to more aggressive behaviours akin to those seen in football stadiums.

Roland-Garros has gained notoriety as one of the rowdiest tournaments on the tour, and Goffin’s experience is emblematic of a broader trend. He was subjected to vocal disapproval during and after his match, including reports of spectators spitting chewing gum in his direction. This incident led him to call the crowd's behaviour "totally disrespectful." The issue isn't confined to Goffin; renowned doubles player Arina Rodionova labelled the fans as "especially feral," while even homegrown talent Alizé Cornet has publicly rebuked certain "idiots" in the crowd for their conduct.

The fervour tends to heighten when it comes to matches involving French players, with the home crowd unabashedly biasing their support. Tennis pundit Mats Wilander offered a restrained analysis, indicating that the Parisian crowd allows for a degree of involvement that starkly contrasts with the decorum expected in other major tournaments. This was evident in the clash between American Taylor Fritz and French player Arthur Rinderknech, where Fritz faced a torrent of boos after besting the local star. Following his win, he cheekily called for more noise from the audience, further amplifying the tension.

The widespread disregard for player welfare during matches has come to a head in recent years, particularly during the tumultuous 2023 edition of the tournament. Rivalries have intensified amid polarising geopolitical issues, as seen in the backlash Ukrainian player Marta Kostyuk faced for refusing to shake hands with Belarusian opponent Aryna Sabalenka. Kostyuk, expressing her disappointment, declared that the crowd should be "honestly embarrassed" by their reaction to her principled stance, highlighting the sensitive nature of political allegiances among the players. Similarly, Daria Kasatkina encountered hostility for her respectful gestures towards Kostyuk, further illustrating the complex interplay between sport and broader social issues.

In a bid to address these growing concerns, French Open organisers have introduced measures aimed at curbing disruptive behaviour. The decision to ban alcohol in the stands, implemented for the first time in 2024, came in response to the unruly conduct that has often eclipsed the gameplay itself. Tournament director Amélie Mauresmo acknowledged that while enthusiasm is appreciated, certain behaviours had indeed crossed acceptable boundaries, necessitating stricter regulations.

Nevertheless, altering the deeply entrenched atmosphere of the French Open may require more than policy changes. A growing number of players have expressed their frustration with crowds that refuse to maintain the respectful decorum typically associated with tennis. The experience of Novak Djokovic has served as a benchmark in this regard. He has faced jeering multiple times throughout his career, often compounded by his own on-court tensions with officials and spectators alike.

As the French Open continues, it remains to be seen whether these measures will foster a more respectful environment for players. For now, the echoing boos and jeers are likely to persist, a vivid reminder of the challenges players face against not just their opponents, but also an increasingly unpredictable and hostile crowd.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/tennis/article-14752951/Why-French-Open-hostile-atmosphere-tennis-disrespectful-feral-fans-boos-player-SPAT.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/belgian-goffin-slams-partisan-french-open-crowd-seeks-action-2024-05-29/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/tennis/article-14752951/Why-French-Open-hostile-atmosphere-tennis-disrespectful-feral-fans-boos-player-SPAT.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230606-embarrassing-feral-disrespectful-french-open-fans-under-fire)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/french-open-goes-dry-with-alcohol-ban-stop-disruptive-fans-2024-05-30/), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tennis/2023/06/05/french-open-2023-crowd-fans-behavioru-roland-garros-booze/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2023/may/28/tennis-french-open-kostyuk-calls-out-crowd-who-booed-her-for-snubbing-sabalenka), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/belgian-goffin-slams-partisan-french-open-crowd-seeks-action-2024-05-29/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/french-open-goes-dry-with-alcohol-ban-stop-disruptive-fans-2024-05-30/), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tennis/2023/06/05/french-open-2023-crowd-fans-behavioru-roland-garros-booze/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/french-open-goes-dry-with-alcohol-ban-stop-disruptive-fans-2024-05-30/), [[5]](https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230606-embarrassing-feral-disrespectful-french-open-fans-under-fire)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/tennis/article-14752951/Why-French-Open-hostile-atmosphere-tennis-disrespectful-feral-fans-boos-player-SPAT.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/french-open-goes-dry-with-alcohol-ban-stop-disruptive-fans-2024-05-30/> - In May 2024, the French Open organisers implemented a ban on alcohol in the stands to address unruly spectator behaviour. This decision followed incidents where players like David Goffin faced disrespectful actions from the crowd, including one throwing chewing gum at him. Tournament director Amélie Mauresmo stated that while enthusiasm is welcomed, certain behaviours had crossed acceptable boundaries, prompting stricter enforcement by umpires and security personnel to ensure a respectful environment for players.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/belgian-goffin-slams-partisan-french-open-crowd-seeks-action-2024-05-29/> - Belgian tennis player David Goffin criticised the French Open crowd for 'total disrespect' after enduring insults and being spat at during his first-round victory over local favourite Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard. Goffin expressed concerns that the atmosphere was becoming akin to football matches, with potential for increased hooliganism. He called on tournament organisers to take action to curb such behaviour, highlighting the need for a more respectful environment at Roland Garros.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2023/may/28/tennis-french-open-kostyuk-calls-out-crowd-who-booed-her-for-snubbing-sabalenka> - Ukrainian tennis player Marta Kostyuk faced boos from the French Open crowd after refusing to shake hands with Belarusian opponent Aryna Sabalenka, in protest over the ongoing war in Ukraine. Kostyuk expressed disappointment over the crowd's reaction, stating that people should be 'honestly embarrassed' for their behaviour. Sabalenka, initially confused by the boos, later acknowledged the situation, noting that Ukrainian players' stance on not shaking hands with Russian and Belarusian opponents was well-known.
5. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230606-embarrassing-feral-disrespectful-french-open-fans-under-fire> - French Open fans faced criticism for their boisterous behaviour, with terms like 'embarrassing', 'disrespectful', and 'feral' used to describe their actions. Incidents included booing players like Marta Kostyuk for refusing to shake hands with Belarusian opponent Aryna Sabalenka, and American player Taylor Fritz being jeered after defeating Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech. The crowd's conduct drew parallels to the aggressive behaviour of football fans, raising concerns about the atmosphere at Roland Garros.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tennis/2023/06/05/french-open-2023-crowd-fans-behavioru-roland-garros-booze/> - The 2023 French Open witnessed a surge in crowd hostility, with players like Daria Kasatkina and Novak Djokovic expressing frustration over the boisterous behaviour of spectators. Kasatkina was booed for being respectful towards her opponent's decision not to shake hands, while Djokovic faced jeers after complaining about a spectator's interruption during a rally. The incidents highlighted the challenges players faced due to the crowd's conduct, prompting discussions about the need for a more respectful environment at Roland Garros.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/tennis/swiatek-back-brink-french-open-fans-come-under-fire-2024-05-29/> - Defending champion Iga Swiatek narrowly avoided an early exit at the French Open, defeating Naomi Osaka in a thrilling second-round match. Despite the rainy conditions and some spectators leaving early, those who remained witnessed an intense battle. Swiatek addressed the crowd post-match, asking them to refrain from making noise during rallies to help players maintain focus. Belgian David Goffin also criticized the fans, claiming he experienced 'total disrespect' and was spat at during his match. Tournament organizers acknowledged the enthusiastic crowds and emphasized the need for respect towards all players.