

2026 Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check

*Assessing the Public Voice on AI of the
Top 20 ATP-Ranked Tennis Players*

Edition 1: 2026

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The Pulse Check examines publicly available information relating to selected elite tennis players and their publicly identifiable relationship with artificial intelligence, including public statements, commentary, advocacy, campaigns, commercial associations and other qualifying AI-related activity.

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A finding of "Public AI Voice Identified" means that qualifying, publicly attributable evidence of AI-related commentary or a qualifying public association with an AI-specific product, service, campaign or initiative was identified within the published research methodology and observation period.

The 2026 Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check is based on information that is publicly available at the time of review, including public statements, media reports, interviews, campaigns, open letters, social media activity, public advocacy, industry announcements and other sources.

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WHY TRUSTED PUBLIC VOICE ON AI OF THE WORLD'S MOST FOLLOWED SPORTSPEOPLE MATTERS

AI is not simply a technology conversation. It increasingly touches questions of job security, creative ownership, misinformation, privacy, environmental impact, human identity and relevance, and the future of work. That complexity and scale makes AI one of the most defining social issues of our time.

One of the defining characteristics of AI as a social issue is its extraordinary dynamism. The balance between its potential benefits and costs continues to change as the technology develops, its applications expand and its impact on the real world becomes more material. New opportunities, risks and consequences are emerging across communities, workplaces and economies, including some that were not previously understood.

With many social issues, people form views against a relatively stable set of facts, experiences and arguments. With AI, the subject of the debate is itself moving. Public conversation can therefore change materially over weeks or months rather than years, as people encounter new capabilities, new applications and new evidence about their consequences.

This creates an unusual environment for public opinion, and public opinion has direct implications for enterprise AI transformation.

Unlike most organisational change initiatives, employee attitudes towards AI are already being shaped outside the enterprise before implementation has begun.

Unlike most workplace change, attitudes towards AI are therefore being shaped well beyond the enterprise's four walls.

Employees may encounter AI through news, social media, public debate and cultural commentary as a technology associated with job displacement,

creative ownership, surveillance and control, misinformation, human identity and relevance.

Long before an organisation introduces an AI strategy, people encounter AI through news media, social media, political debate, commercial advertising, popular culture, personal experience and the voices of influential public figures.

They may already have formed views about job displacement, surveillance, creativity, misinformation, productivity, human value and the future of work.

The enterprise is not introducing AI into a blank space; it is introducing AI into an already established social conversation. This means the workplace does not get to start the AI conversation, but rather joins a conversation that has already begun.

This matters because experienced organisational change practitioners recognise that successful transformation requires more than designing new processes or deploying new technology. Organisations invest considerable effort in understanding the environment in which change will occur, including the experiences, attitudes, concerns and expectations of the people expected to adopt it. These insights help shape communication, leadership and change strategies that are responsive to the workforce rather than imposed upon it.

For organisations seeking to build trust and confidence in AI, this matters. Successful transformation requires more than designing new processes or deploying new technology. Organisations must understand the environment in which change will occur, including the experiences, attitudes, concerns and expectations that people bring with them.

AI introduces an additional layer of complexity because some of those attitudes may have been formed before an employee encounters AI through their employer.

This is the environment into which enterprise AI transformation must enter. It is also the context in which public voice on AI becomes a material consideration.

The significance for enterprise AI transformation is straightforward. Organisations seeking to build trust and confidence in AI are not introducing the technology into a neutral environment. Employees may arrive with established hopes, fears, assumptions and expectations shaped by a much broader public conversation. That conversation therefore becomes part of the environment into which organisations introduce AI, and public voices capable of influencing that conversation may matter more than is immediately apparent.

What This Pulse Check Examines

The AI Public Voice Pulse Check series has been developed to examine how influential public figures engage with AI in the public sphere. It is designed to create a longitudinal record of how society's most influential institutions engage with AI as the technology reshapes work, enterprise and public life.

The Public Voice Pulse Check series examines what is publicly identifiable about the AI voice and AI-related associations of influential public figures. It does not seek to determine whether those individuals are right or wrong, whether they support or oppose AI, or whether they should have a position on the technology.

The Pulse Check asks what is publicly visible at a particular point in time. Has an individual spoken publicly about AI? Have they participated in an AI-specific initiative? Have they knowingly associated themselves with an AI-related product, service, campaign or activity? And, where a public voice exists, what can be observed about its nature?

The Pulse Check does not assess whether elite sportspeople ought to speak about AI. Nor does the absence of a public voice imply that an individual should have one. Instead, it establishes a point-in-time baseline of what can be observed in the public record.

Public sentiment about AI should not be understood as a static measure of whether people are simply "for" or "against" AI. It is a conversation continually recalibrated as people encounter new evidence, capabilities, risks and experiences. A public position visible today may therefore look

different as the technology and the surrounding social conversation develop.

Why Elite Tennis Players Are an Important Case Study for AI Public Voice

Elite tennis players occupy a distinctive position within global sport. They are recognised not only for athletic performance but also for competing in one of the world's most technologically advanced sporting environments.

Their public identity is closely associated with innovation, engineering excellence and technological progress. Where players choose to engage thoughtfully with AI, they have the opportunity to help translate AI from a largely technical discussion into a human one - one that recognises both innovation and responsibility, possibility and consequence.

They are highly visible, followed across national and cultural boundaries, and increasingly operate as individual brands whose influence extends well beyond their sporting performance.

They provide a particularly interesting cohort for examining AI public voice because they generally compete as independent professionals. While supported by coaches, managers, agents and sponsors, they do not ordinarily communicate within the organisational communications framework of a club, franchise or constructor.

If an elite tennis player speaks publicly about AI, participates in an AI initiative or commercially associates themselves with AI, the connection to the individual is generally direct. Conversely, where no AI public voice is identifiable, that absence provides a clearer observation of individual public engagement than may be possible in sporting environments where communications are more closely connected to teams or organisations.

This does not make tennis players responsible for leading the public conversation about AI. Nor does it create an expectation that they should comment on it.

Rather, their relative independence provides an unusually clear lens through which to observe whether and how influential individual athletes are

engaging with one of the defining technological and societal developments of the present period.

Tennis itself is increasingly intersecting with AI and advanced technology. Data analytics, performance modelling, injury prevention, officiating systems, broadcast innovation and digital fan engagement are changing aspects of the professional tennis environment.

At the same time, players' commercial relationships and personal brands increasingly intersect with technology, digital experiences, advertising and AI-enabled applications.

Elite tennis players are therefore operating within an environment in which AI is becoming increasingly relevant to their profession, their commercial relationships and the broader society in which they live.

Yet professional exposure to AI and public voice about AI are not necessarily the same thing.

This Pulse Check is interested in that distinction.

It asks what, if anything, is publicly visible in the AI voice of a cohort of highly visible, globally recognised and comparatively independent elite sporting professionals.

The significance lies not in whether those players are sufficiently vocal, nor in whether their views are desirable. It lies in what the public record tells us about the intersection between AI, influence, trust and public voice at this particular point in the evolution of the technology.

Additionally, because the wider AI conversation is changing rapidly, both public AI voice and the absence of a publicly identifiable AI voice may change with it.

This Pulse Check therefore provides an observational baseline of the publicly visible AI landscape among elite tennis players at the time of research. It offers a window into one part of the wider social environment in which AI is being understood, discussed and increasingly introduced into organisations and everyday life.

What Does It Mean for an Elite Sportsperson to Lend Their Trust to AI?

The question of commercial association with AI becomes more interesting when considered in the context of the public environment into which that association enters.

AI is not a conventional consumer category. Public attitudes toward it remain mixed and are evolving rapidly. Stanford's 2026 AI Index describes a public conversation in which optimism is rising, but so too is anxiety: globally, 59% of respondents said AI products and services offer more benefits than drawbacks, while 52% said they were nervous about AI. The Index also identifies substantial differences between experts and the public in expectations about AI's impact on work and the economy. ([Stanford HAI][1])

Source: Stanford HAI, 2026 AI Index Report, Public Opinion.

Against that backdrop, a different question arises when an elite sportsperson with millions of followers chooses to associate their personal identity with AI.

Why would an elite sportsperson, trusted by fans and the wider community, lend their name, identity and personal credibility to an AI product or enterprise?

The question is not whether such an association is right or wrong. Nor is it whether the player personally endorses every aspect of AI. A commercial relationship may be based on a particular product, technology or commercial proposition, rather than on a general position about artificial intelligence.

But the distinction between endorsing a product and being publicly associated with AI may be less clear to an audience.

Elite sportspeople possess something that AI companies cannot manufacture through advertising alone: a pre-existing relationship of familiarity and trust with millions of people. Their audiences have followed their careers, watched them compete, identified with them and, in many cases, developed a personal affinity with them over many years. When that individual chooses to place their name and identity alongside a technology, the association can carry meaning beyond the functional claims of the product itself.

This potentially gives elite sportspeople a distinctive role in the public adoption of emerging technologies. They can make an abstract or unfamiliar technology culturally familiar. They can position it alongside qualities such as performance, achievement, aspiration, innovation and human capability.

But that influence also creates a different kind of consideration.

If public attitudes toward AI become more positive, the association may be perceived as an endorsement of innovation and progress. If concerns intensify around employment, privacy, environmental impact, authenticity, misinformation, regulation or the distribution of AI's benefits, the same association may acquire a different meaning.

The athlete does not control that evolution.

This is particularly relevant because AI itself is changing rapidly. The technology, the claims being made about it and public understanding of its consequences are all moving at a pace that makes today's commercial proposition potentially different from tomorrow's public perception.

The question therefore extends beyond sponsorship.

What is the value, responsibility and potential risk of lending personal trust to a technology whose social licence is still being formed?

The Pulse Check does not attempt to answer that question for individual players. Nor does it suggest that elite sportspeople should avoid commercial relationships with AI.

Rather, the observation is that AI-specific commercial representation is qualitatively different from many conventional endorsements. When an elite sportsperson associates their personal identity with AI, they potentially become part of a much larger public conversation about a technology that is already provoking significant questions about work, human capability, trust and society.

That makes the emerging question not simply whether AI companies will seek out elite sporting identities, but what happens when people with extraordinary public reach choose to lend their

personal credibility to AI at a time when society is still deciding how much it trusts the technology itself.

[1]: https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report/public-opinion?utm_source=chatgpt.com "Public Opinion | The 2026 AI Index Report | Stanford HAI"

RESULTS

The 2026 Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check examined a cohort of 20 elite tennis players to determine whether a publicly identifiable AI voice could be identified using the published methodology.

Applying the two-stage methodology, a publicly identifiable AI voice was identified for 7 of the 20 players (35%). For the remaining 13 players (65%), no publicly identifiable AI voice was identified within the scope of the review.

In 6 of the 7 cases where a public AI voice was observed, the voice arose primarily through direct discussion of personal experimentation or use of AI. The six players whose public commentary was identified were Jannik Sinner, Daniil Medvedev, Jessica Pegula, Coco Gauff, Iga Świątek and Elina Svitolina.

The commentary identified among these players was predominantly practical and experiential. AI was discussed principally as a tool that could be used in or around professional tennis, rather than as a broader technological, economic or societal issue.

Jannik Sinner and Daniil Medvedev discussed the use of AI in relation to opponent preparation and performance analysis, including the use of ChatGPT to explore strategies for playing against leading players.

Jessica Pegula similarly discussed AI in the context of opponent scouting and the synthesis of information.

Iga Świątek described using ChatGPT for practical purposes while distinguishing its use from the professional statistical analysis and coaching expertise she relies upon for tennis.

Elina Svitolina publicly acknowledged using ChatGPT for everyday personal purposes.

Coco Gauff provided the broadest form of commentary identified within the cohort, discussing both experimentation with AI in relation to tennis and broader concerns regarding its environmental implications.

2026 ELITE TENNIS PLAYER AI PUBLIC VOICE PULSE CHECK RESULTS

RANK	TENNIS PLAYER	DIRECT AI VOICE (Stage 1)	AI ASSOCIATION (Stage 2)	OVERALL RESULT (Either Stage 1 or 2 = Yes)
1	Jannik Sinner	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
2	Carlos Alcaraz	✗ No	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
3	Alexander Zverev	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
4	Félix Auger-Aliassime	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
5	Novak Djokovic	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
6	Daniil Medvedev	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
7	Alex de Minaur	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
8	Taylor Fritz	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
9	Flavio Cobolli	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
10	Ben Shelton	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
11	Aryna Sabalenka	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
12	Elena Rybakina	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
13	Jessica Pegula	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
14	Coco Gauff	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
15	Mirra Andreeva	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
16	Karolina Muchová	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
17	Linda Nosková	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No
18	Iga Świątek	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
19	Elina Svitolina	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
20	Amanda Anisimova	✗ No	✗ No	✗ No

 PUBLIC AI VOICE IDENTIFIED
7 of 20 players (35%)
Yes

 NO PUBLIC AI VOICE IDENTIFIED
13 of 20 players (65%)
No

One player, Carlos Alcaraz, was identified through a qualifying AI-specific commercial association. His identification arose through a publicly announced commercial partnership involving the co-development of AI-led performance tools. Consistent with the published methodology, this qualifying public association was sufficient to establish a publicly identifiable AI voice, irrespective of whether it represented an independently expressed personal position on AI.

Taken together, the seven cases suggest that where elite tennis players are publicly engaging with AI, they are predominantly appearing in the conversation as users of AI rather than as commentators on its broader implications. The dominant themes identified were performance and opponent analysis, information and scouting, personal productivity, everyday experimentation and commercial association with AI technology.

No player within the cohort was identified as having developed a sustained public position on AI's broader implications for employment, enterprise transformation, trust, human contribution, governance or society.

The 2026 Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check contributes to a broader longitudinal record

of how influential public communities are engaging with AI as the technology increasingly reshapes work, enterprise and public life. Its purpose is not to suggest that athletes should speak about AI, but to examine what is publicly visible when they do, and what remains comparatively absent from the public conversation.

The Pulse Check conducted in July 2026 provides a useful baseline for observing what happens next as AI becomes more capable, more pervasive and more consequential across society and the global sporting environment.

KEY FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

1. Individual Use and Exploration of AI Rather Than Promotion of AI

In 6 of the 7 cases in which elite tennis players were identified as having a publicly identifiable AI voice, they most often described their own individual choice to use, explore or experiment with AI, rather than promoting AI or presenting themselves as representatives of the technology.

The engagement described by the players is predominantly personal and practical. In several cases, the uses identified are recognisable in the ways AI is increasingly being used by the wider public. The emerging public AI voice among elite tennis players therefore appears primarily experiential rather than declarative.

Three broad forms of individual engagement with AI were observed.

The first involves experimentation connected to professional performance. Jannik Sinner, Daniil Medvedev and Jessica Pegula have publicly discussed using AI tools such as ChatGPT in relation to opponent analysis, scouting and preparation. In these cases, AI is being explored as an additional source of information that may help players understand opponents, identify patterns or consider alternative approaches to preparation.

The second involves everyday personal use. Iga Świątek has described using ChatGPT for practical tasks such as helping to write emails, while Elina Svitolina has spoken about using it for personal questions unrelated to tennis.

These examples are particularly interesting because they are unremarkable. They do not involve elite performance, technological innovation or commercial representation. They demonstrate AI becoming part of the ordinary digital toolkit of elite athletes in ways that closely resemble how many members of the wider public are beginning to use it.

The third, represented by Coco Gauff, sits between personal experimentation and broader reflection. Her engagement therefore extends beyond what AI can do for her personally and begins to acknowledge some of the wider implications associated with its use. Gauff has discussed experimenting with AI in relation to tennis while also expressing concern about the environmental consequences of AI. This was the clearest articulation of concern about AI identified within the cohort.

Collectively these three examples suggest that the emerging public AI voice among elite tennis players is principally experiential rather than declarative. The players identified are generally not presenting themselves as authorities on AI, advocating for its adoption or attempting to shape the broader public debate. Rather, they are using it, testing it, exploring it and, in one case, questioning some of its consequences.

The strongest pattern across this Pulse Check is not elite tennis players promoting artificial intelligence, or even their utilisation of AI within the framework of a club, team or sports competition but rather individually encountering and incorporating AI into their own lives. Of the Pulse Checks conducted to date, tennis provides perhaps the clearest indication of AI appearing through the ordinary experiences and choices of elite sportspeople, including uses that are readily recognisable to the wider public.

2. As an Individual Sport, Tennis Offers Greater Autonomy Over Public AI Association Than Team Sports

The unique and defining characteristic of the sport in question for this Pulse Check is that it is an individual sport rather than a team sport. Unlike athletes competing within permanent clubs, teams, franchises or other organisations, an elite tennis player does not ordinarily represent a permanent organisation as part of their professional identity. They compete as individual professionals. That is particularly significant in the context of AI.

Across elite sport, AI relationships can occur at several levels. An AI enterprise may establish relationships with governing bodies, competitions, teams, clubs or franchises. players may then

become associated with AI initiatives through the organisations they represent, even where the underlying AI relationship was not initiated or determined by the individual athlete.

AI technology may also be incorporated directly into the functioning of a sport or competition. AI is also increasingly being used by teams to improve performance. This can create relationships between AI enterprises and the teams, clubs or franchises participating within a competition. players may subsequently become associated with those AI initiatives through the organisations they represent, even where the underlying AI relationship was not initiated or determined by the individual athlete.

Tennis has fewer of these organisational layers.

A player may be associated with a tournament, governing body or commercial partner, but there is generally no permanent club or team whose AI strategy, technology partnerships or corporate communications become an inherent part of the player's public identity.

This gives elite tennis players a distance and a degree of autonomy over their public association with AI.

A player with substantial control over their individual public identity has greater scope to explore emerging technologies, share personal experiences and contribute to public conversations without necessarily having to align their public position with that of a team or sporting organisation.

A tennis player's decision to discuss AI then experiment with AI publicly, participate in an AI-specific initiative or associate their personal brand with an AI enterprise can be more directly attributed to the individual than may necessarily be the case in a team-based sporting environment.

The distinction is particularly important when interpreting the absence of a public AI voice.

In team-based sporting environments, some AI association may originate from the club, team or constructor an athlete represents. In tennis, there is generally less organisational infrastructure through

which an AI relationship can reach the individual player. Conversely, where an elite tennis player independently chooses to bring AI into their public identity, the connection between individual choice and public AI voice is more direct.

This poses an interesting question for Pulse Checks: if greater autonomy over one's public voice creates greater freedom to choose what to say, does it also lead to greater engagement with one of the defining technological, economic and human transformations of our time?

3. Autonomy Creates Greater Control Over Public AI Association

As AI becomes one of the defining technological, economic and human transformations of our time, who among the people with the greatest capacity to influence public understanding will choose to speak about it?

When individuals with extraordinary public reach have the autonomy to choose what they say, what does their decision to speak, remain silent or associate themselves with AI tell us about the place of artificial intelligence in the public conversation?

Autonomy gives a player greater control over whether and how they become publicly associated with AI. A player can remain silent, offer a balanced public perspective, or adopt a cautious or concerned tone. Depending on how AI unfolds over coming years and months, the absence of a public AI record may also prove consequential for the sportsperson.

AI is not an issue that can be understood through either optimism or concern alone.

Public discussion increasingly reflects both extraordinary opportunity and legitimate questions. AI is widely recognised for its potential to accelerate scientific discovery, improve healthcare, enhance engineering, increase productivity and solve problems that have challenged industries for decades. At the same time, concerns continue to be expressed about employment, misinformation, creative ownership, privacy, bias, transparency, governance, environmental impact and the future role of human judgement.

4. Direct AI Commercial Relationships with Elite Tennis Players Have Yet to Emerge at Scale

Beyond the level of public AI commentary by players themselves, the Pulse Check also considered whether elite tennis players are becoming commercially associated with AI enterprises and AI-specific initiatives.

The findings suggest that, at least within the 20 player cohort examined, direct commercial relationships between leading AI enterprises and elite tennis players remain limited.

This is notable when considered against developments in other sporting categories. Across some elite sports, AI enterprises and technology companies are increasingly using high-profile athletes, teams and sporting identities as commercial partners, ambassadors or public representatives of AI-related products and initiatives. These relationships provide AI companies with access not only to large audiences, but to sporting identities already associated with performance, innovation, technology, precision and human achievement.

The equivalent pattern is not yet clearly visible in elite tennis.

While tennis players maintain extensive commercial relationships across apparel, equipment, financial services, luxury goods, automotive, consumer technology and other sectors, the research undertaken for this Pulse Check did not identify a comparable pattern of direct AI-company sponsorship or AI-specific commercial association among the 20 players examined, with the notable exception of the AI-related commercial association identified in the case of Carlos Alcaraz.

This does not mean that AI is absent from the commercial environment surrounding professional tennis. Technology companies and tennis organisations are increasingly incorporating AI into performance systems, data analysis, fan engagement, media and other aspects of the sport. Nor does it suggest that AI-specific commercial relationships with tennis players will not emerge. Rather, the current findings indicate that AI has not yet become a prominent category

of direct personal endorsement or sponsorship among this cohort.

Elite tennis players possess many of the characteristics that make sporting identities attractive to technology companies. They operate as globally recognised individual brands, communicate directly with large audiences and are associated with attributes including performance, discipline, precision, data, continual improvement and technological innovation. Unlike team sports, their individual identity is also highly visible and commercially transferable across tournaments, countries and seasons.

AI is increasingly entering the professional tennis ecosystem, and some elite players are beginning to discuss their own use of AI. However, with the exception of isolated examples, AI enterprises have yet to establish the kind of direct commercial relationships with elite tennis identities that are becoming visible in some other sporting categories.

Whether tennis becomes a significant next frontier for AI sponsorship and athlete partnerships remains an open question. Future editions of the Pulse Check may reveal whether this apparent commercial gap persists, or whether AI companies increasingly seek to place elite tennis players among the public identities through which the technology is understood.

5. Elite Tennis Players Have Demonstrated Public Voices on Other Issues, But Comparatively Little on AI

No player within the cohort was identified as having developed a sustained public position on AI's broader implications for employment, enterprise transformation, trust, human contribution, governance or society.

This should not be interpreted as suggesting that elite tennis players are reluctant to engage with broader public issues.

However it is to be contrasted with tennis players within the cohort who have demonstrated that they can develop prominent public voices on matters they consider personally important, socially

significant or closely connected with their own experiences.

Novak Djokovic, for example, has maintained a longstanding public voice around early childhood education, children's welfare and access to opportunity through the Novak Djokovic Foundation.

Alexander Zverev has used his public profile to raise awareness of Type 1 diabetes and support children living with the condition through his foundation.

Felix Auger-Aliassime established the #FAAPointsForChange initiative to support education and development in Togo, while Ben Shelton has publicly engaged with environmental sustainability and the environmental impact of professional tennis.

Taylor Fritz has used his profile to support wildfire relief in his home community of Los Angeles, while Alex de Minaur has established a foundation focused on creating opportunities for the next generation of Australian tennis players.

Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz have both established foundations supporting children and young people through education, sport and social development.

These examples demonstrate that the players are capable of using their individual public identities to contribute to issues extending well beyond competitive tennis. They are significant because they demonstrate that elite tennis players are not simply public figures whose communications are confined to tournaments, rankings and commercial endorsements. Some have used their individual platforms, personal experiences and financial resources to advocate for causes, support communities and draw attention to issues they consider important.

There is another dimension to these examples that potentially distinguishes them from AI. These players have demonstrated that they are willing to use their public voices when an issue becomes personally meaningful, socially important or closely connected with their identity. Yet AI has not, to date, emerged as a comparable cause, issue or

subject of sustained public advocacy. Even though AI is entering tennis, it may remain somewhat at arm's length at a personal level. Alternatively, AI may be sufficiently complex as a social issue that forming a public position requires a level of consideration that players have not, to date, chosen to make public.

As AI becomes increasingly relevant to sport and society, the future public record may reveal whether tennis players begin to discuss not only how AI can be used to improve performance, but what increasingly intelligent technologies mean for human performance, creativity, identity, work and contribution.

Whether that broader public voice emerges remains to be seen. The Pulse Check provides a baseline against which that evolution can be observed in future editions.

Strategic Observations

1. Could Elite Sportspeople Be a Sleeping Giant in the AI Conversation?

Elite sportspeople are not required to speak on social issues. Indeed some would argue they have no place to. Others would prefer they don't and that should be left to elected representatives, policymakers, economists, technologists or workplace leaders.

But historically, celebrities and elite sportspeople have lent that social capital to matters beyond their professional fields.

Their influence has extended beyond their professional achievements because the relationship they develop with audiences can give them something that few institutions or individuals possess at comparable scale: social capital.

They have supported social causes, raised awareness of community issues, contributed to public conversations and used their platforms in ways that have extended their influence beyond entertainment or sport.

Muhammad Ali challenged prevailing attitudes towards race, religion and war; Billie Jean King used her prominence to advance gender equality

and LGBTQ+ rights; Audrey Hepburn used her global fame to advocate for children through UNICEF; and Harry Belafonte used his platform in the civil rights movement and later for humanitarian causes.

These examples are different in purpose, context and consequence, but they share a common characteristic: people with extraordinary public visibility used some of their social capital to bring wider public attention to issues that mattered beyond their profession

Elite sportspeople occupy a particularly distinctive position within this landscape. Sporting achievement can give them extraordinary reach, while sustained visibility, familiarity and identification with audiences can create high levels of public trust and emotional connection. Their influence is therefore not simply a function of how many people follow them. It is also a function of the relationship audiences have with them.

Their public influence represents a form of soft power. It can attract attention to an issue, make an unfamiliar subject more culturally accessible, signal that an issue matters, or encourage audiences to engage with a conversation they might otherwise overlook.

The implications of AI increasingly extend well beyond technology. AI is reshaping work, education, creativity, communication, identity and everyday life. Public concern and debate are consequently expanding beyond questions of what AI can do towards questions of what AI means for people and society.

This creates an intriguing possibility if the implications of AI become increasingly social and human, that social capital may become more significant to the AI conversation than it is today.

2. The Elite Sportsperson Potentially Represents an Accessible, Trusted Public Voice for AI Companies

Public trust of AI remains a defining challenge. There is no obvious short-term scenario in which AI simply becomes a universally trusted category.

The issue is no longer only whether people perceive AI as trustworthy. As AI becomes more capable and autonomous, questions of reliability, safety, transparency and control are increasingly being experienced in practice. AI systems can make mistakes, behave unexpectedly and, increasingly, act with a degree of autonomy that makes the consequences of those failures more tangible.

If public trust is an asset that can be borrowed, strengthened or transferred through credible human association, elite sport may represent a particularly accessible environment in which to seek it. The combination of global visibility, established personal brands, large audiences and a professional identity that is not directly threatened by AI substitution may make elite sportspeople commercially attractive partners for AI companies seeking to humanise the category and build public confidence.

As AI increasingly enters the commercial marketplace, elite sportspeople may become one of the relatively few categories of highly visible public figures for whom representing AI does not carry an obvious contradiction with the value of their own work.

Elite sportspeople occupy a relatively distinctive position. Their professional value is built primarily around physical performance, competition and human capability. Their work product is therefore, at least presently, less directly exposed to replacement by generative and autonomous AI than the work of many other highly visible public figures.

The contrast is potentially significant. For writers, filmmakers, actors, musicians and other creative professionals, AI is increasingly capable of producing, replicating or materially altering elements of the work through which those individuals earn their living and establish their professional identity. For some, association with AI may therefore carry a more immediate tension: the technology seeking their endorsement may also be perceived as threatening the value, ownership or future of the very work they represent.

That may make elite sportspeople a comparatively accessible category for commercial association

with AI companies as the nature of their relationship with the technology may create fewer direct conflicts of interest.

The State of the AI Conversation in Mid-2026

The public voice of elite tennis players on AI does not occur in a vacuum. It sits within a broader public conversation about what AI means, what it may deliver and what its consequences may be.

When a public figure or organisation speaks about AI, that voice enters a conversation already shaped by optimism and anxiety, adoption and resistance, opportunity and uncertainty. A positive, neutral or critical voice is therefore received against expectations and assumptions that already exist within the public.

The Pulse Check does not seek to determine whether any particular position on AI is right or wrong. It asks a different question:

How does the public AI voice of elite tennis players sit within the broader public conversation about AI?

The Pulse Check series does not attempt to recreate or independently measure public opinion about AI. A substantial and growing body of research already examines public attitudes, sentiment and experience with AI, including research from the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI through its AI Index, Ipsos, the Pew Research Center, Gallup, Edelman and Lightcast. The Pulse Checks consider this established body of research as context for understanding the broader public conversation rather than attempting to replicate it.

This distinction is important because the AI conversation is extraordinarily dynamic. Technology capabilities, investment, regulation, enterprise adoption and public understanding are changing rapidly, often in response to one another. At the same time, questions about trust, employment, infrastructure, human agency and whether the benefits of AI will be broadly shared are becoming increasingly prominent.

An Environment That Is Difficult to Predict

Technology capabilities, investment, regulation, enterprise adoption, public sentiment and the competitive landscape are changing rapidly and often in response to one another. Developments that appear significant today can be overtaken, revised or challenged within months.

This makes forecasting particularly difficult. It is challenging to know how the AI landscape will unfold over the next three months, let alone the next 12 months or the years beyond.

That uncertainty is precisely why the broader public conversation matters to the Pulse Check.

The findings in this research should not be interpreted against a fixed or settled view of AI. They should be understood against a public conversation that is itself evolving, sometimes rapidly.

The Pulse Checks are therefore best understood as snapshots of the AI conversation at a particular point in time.

They do not attempt to predict where that conversation is heading. Rather, they capture what can be observed about public voice, engagement and participation against a rapidly changing social and technological backdrop.

This provides the context for examining the public AI voice of elite tennis players: not as a judgement of whether they should speak, but as an observation of what is publicly visible, and how that voice sits within the broader conversation taking place around AI in mid-2026.

Against this backdrop, several themes are particularly visible in the public conversation in mid-2026.

1. The Prospect of an AI Bubble

Concern about a potential AI bubble is not simply a question of whether AI companies or investments are overvalued. It reflects a broader question about whether the scale of investment, infrastructure development and corporate expectation surrounding AI is sustainable, and whether the benefits ultimately experienced by society will justify the enormous financial and social investment being made.

For the public, the consequences of a significant correction could extend well beyond financial markets. If expectations collapse, it could contribute to growing cynicism about AI, particularly among people already uncertain about its impact on employment, privacy, creativity and trust.

Conversely, continued rapid investment without visible and broadly shared benefits may reinforce a perception that AI is primarily serving investors, technology companies and wealthy economies rather than the wider community.

The significance of the potential AI bubble therefore extends beyond financial valuation. A growing gap between the expectations being created around AI and the benefits experienced by ordinary people could become another source of public scepticism.

2. Data Centres: When AI Becomes a Local Issue

The rapid expansion of AI data centres has brought the consequences of AI directly into communities. What was once a largely invisible infrastructure issue is increasingly being debated in terms of electricity, water, land use, household costs, environmental impact and who ultimately pays for the infrastructure required to support AI.

In the United States, a March 2026 Gallup survey found that 71% of Americans opposed the construction of an AI data centre in their local area, including 48% who were strongly opposed. Environmental impacts, resource consumption, local quality of life and potential increases in energy costs were among the concerns expressed. Australia is experiencing similar tensions. Governments continue to promote data centres as opportunities for investment, jobs and digital capability, while communities and policymakers are questioning their demands on energy and water resources.

The significance for the public AI conversation is considerable. AI is becoming physically visible within communities. The debate is no longer only about what happens on a screen; it is increasingly about what AI infrastructure means for people's communities and shared resources.

This raises a broader question about the social licence of AI: will people accept the infrastructure required to deliver AI if they do not believe its benefits are being fairly shared?

3. The Prospect of a 'Job Apocalypse' Remains Unclear

The prospect of widespread AI-driven job displacement has become one of the most powerful narratives in the public conversation about AI.

There remains considerable uncertainty about the scale and timing of actual displacement. At the same time, the prospect of AI performing increasingly sophisticated cognitive and professional tasks has created genuine anxiety about career security, particularly among younger people and those entering traditionally white-collar professions.

The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2025* estimates that broader structural labour-market change could displace 92 million roles by 2030 while creating new employment opportunities. Although the report projects a net increase in jobs overall, the roles created will not necessarily be the same roles, in the same locations, requiring the same capabilities or available to the same people.

For many people, therefore, concern is shaped less by long-term economic forecasts than by immediate questions of employment, fairness and human relevance.

Public concern is also not limited to the possibility of mass unemployment. It encompasses uncertainty about what work will remain, how jobs will change, whether people will have sufficient time and opportunity to adapt, and whether human skills will retain their value.

The question is increasingly not simply whether AI will replace jobs, but whether it will fundamentally alter the pathway into work, the value of human contribution and the relationship between people and their employers.

People are being asked to prepare for a future of work that neither governments, employers nor technology companies can yet clearly describe.

That uncertainty is an important part of the public mood surrounding AI and a critical backdrop to any discussion of AI, work and human contribution.

4. AI Companies Are Moderating Some of the 'Doom' Narrative

An interesting development in the 2026 AI conversation has been the softening of some of the more dramatic predictions about AI-driven job destruction.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has acknowledged that earlier concerns about AI rapidly eliminating entry-level white-collar jobs have not materialised to the extent anticipated. This illustrates a broader challenge in the public conversation: predictions about technological capability and predictions about its social and economic consequences do not necessarily move at the same pace.

For the public, changing narratives can raise questions of credibility and trust.

Earlier warnings helped establish the possibility of a 'job apocalypse' as a legitimate part of the AI conversation. A subsequent moderation of those predictions does not necessarily remove the anxiety they created, particularly for people already uncertain about their employment prospects.

It also reinforces a broader question: if the people building AI cannot confidently predict its impact on work, how can employees, governments or the wider public confidently prepare for it?

5. Increasing Government Intervention and Regulation

Another important development in the 2026 AI conversation is the increasing involvement of governments in the governance of advanced AI.

The U.S. government's increasingly direct intervention in the activities of frontier AI companies, including actions involving Anthropic, provides a visible example. These developments reflect the growing intersection of advanced AI with national security, economic policy, technology sovereignty and public safety.

For the public, interventions such as these provide tangible evidence that governments themselves regard increasingly capable AI systems as having implications that warrant government oversight.

The conversation is therefore moving beyond the abstract question of whether AI **should** be regulated. Government intervention is increasingly becoming part of the reality of how frontier AI is developed, deployed and accessed.

This is also consistent with public sentiment. Anthropic's 2026 Public Record research found that more than 70% of Americans surveyed believed government should play a role in regulating AI.

6. Instances of AI Going 'Rogue'.

Recent incidents involving frontier AI systems have given the public conversation a more tangible sense of what can happen when increasingly autonomous systems operate beyond their intended boundaries.

In July 2026, OpenAI disclosed that models being tested for cybersecurity capabilities had gained unintended internet access and subsequently compromised systems belonging to Hugging Face during an internal test. OpenAI said the models exploited a vulnerability in a software package installer, allowing them to access the broader internet and ultimately obtain information from Hugging Face's infrastructure.

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These incidents have intensified discussion about control, containment, accountability and human oversight.

The significance extends beyond whether the phrase 'going rogue' is technically accurate. As AI moves from generating answers towards taking actions, the public question increasingly becomes: What happens when an AI system acts in ways its creators or operators did not anticipate?

7. Enterprise Experience With AI: Adoption Remains Relatively Light

Alongside these broader developments, enterprise experience with AI provides another important part of the context.

While AI adoption is expanding, the transformation of organisations remains at an early and uneven stage. The significance of this is that public expectations, concerns and assumptions about AI are developing at a time when many people have yet to experience substantial enterprise AI transformation directly.

This creates an unusual environment for organisations.

Employees may already have formed views about AI through the broader public conversation before they have meaningful experience of how AI will actually affect their work. The expectations entering the workplace may therefore be shaped as much by external narratives as by organisational experience.

THE STATE OF THE AI CONVERSATION IN MID-2026

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Are elite tennis players 'reading the room' of public sentiment on AI?

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What we do know is that the AI environment is extraordinarily dynamic.

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METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of the 2026 Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check is to examine:

- whether a publicly identifiable AI voice can be found among elite tennis players;
- whether that public record reflects a developed position on AI or only incidental proximity to AI;
- the nature of any public AI voice, including the issues, themes and contexts in which AI is discussed.

The Pulse Check is intentionally observational. It seeks to understand what is publicly visible rather than evaluate whether particular views are right, wrong or desirable.

Its value lies in understanding how one of the world's most influential sporting communities is publicly framing AI at a time when AI is increasingly reshaping both elite tennis and the enterprises that surround it.

Meaning of a Pulse Check

In enterprise transformation, a pulse check usually refers to a quick, light-touch survey or temperature check designed to gauge employee sentiment, alignment or readiness around major changes, often asking staff directly how they feel.

This Pulse Check applies the same principle in a different way.

Rather than surveying players directly, it observes the publicly visible record to understand how elite tennis players are engaging with AI in the public domain. It therefore represents an external pulse check of public AI voice rather than an internal survey of opinion.

Selection of Players

The 2026 Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check examines the world's leading 20 professional singles players, comprising the Top 10 ATP men's singles players and the Top 10 WTA

women's singles players, based on the official world rankings as at 31 July 2026.

What Constitutes Public AI Voice?

For the purposes of this Pulse Check, public AI voice comprises publicly attributable commentary about AI and, where applicable, public association with an AI-specific product, campaign or initiative.

Only material publicly available before the publication date of this report was considered.

Public AI voice is not limited to commentary. Where an influential individual knowingly and publicly associates their identity, image, likeness, voice or personal brand with an AI-specific product, campaign or initiative, that association forms part of the observable public conversation about AI. Such representation is therefore included within the scope of the Pulse Check.

The absence of an identified public AI voice should not be interpreted as evidence that a player has no view on AI. It indicates only that no attributable commentary or qualifying public association was identified within the scope of the review.

The Pulse Check applies a two-stage test to each player:

Stage 1 – Public Commentary - Has the player made a publicly attributable comment about AI?

This is the primary measure of public AI voice because it represents direct participation in public discourse. Relevant material may include interviews, public statements, social media posts, podcasts, speeches, published articles, media quotations or comparable communications in which the player specifically comments on AI.

Stage 2 – Public Association

Where no qualifying commentary is identified, has the player knowingly and publicly associated their identity, image, likeness, voice or personal brand with an AI-specific product, service, campaign or initiative?

This secondary measure recognises that public representation can communicate association with

AI without the individual expressing a personal view. Participation in, endorsement of or representation of an AI-specific initiative therefore forms part of the observable AI landscape.

A public AI voice is recorded where either Stage 1 or Stage 2 is satisfied.

Consistent with the observational purpose of the Pulse Check, the methodology does not assess the quality, frequency, accuracy or desirability of any commentary or association. It does not seek to determine whether a player should have a position on AI. It records only whether a publicly identifiable AI voice was found within the defined scope and methodology of the review.

Conceptual and Analytical Foundation

The Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check asks a straightforward question: what is publicly visible about the AI voice of elite tennis players?

The question sits within a broader conceptual framework developed through John Harding's *Hearts, Minds & Hands* trilogy:

- * *The Human Point of Difference (HPOD): Finding Your Human Relevance in the Age of AI**
- * *A New Bargain: Reframing the Employment Relationship for the Age of AI**
- * *The Jinji Method: Strategic, Sustainable & Humane Enterprise AI Transformation**

Across the trilogy, AI transformation is considered not simply as a technological challenge, but as a human, enterprise and societal one. Technology creates capability, but successful transformation also depends on trust, culture, leadership, human relevance and the way people understand AI and its role in work and society.

The Pulse Checks extend that thinking into the public sphere.

Where publicly identifiable AI engagement is limited, the findings may suggest that the relative absence of AI discussion is not simply a consequence of organisational communications structures. Where engagement is identified, it may provide insight into how independent global sporting figures are participating in one of the

defining technological and societal conversations of the time.

From Public Voice to Enterprise AI

People do not encounter AI for the first time when their employer announces an AI strategy. Their understanding of AI is already being shaped by news media, social media, commercial campaigns, public debate and the people and institutions they trust.

Public sentiment therefore forms part of the environment into which enterprise AI transformation is introduced.

This creates a connection between public voice and enterprise transformation. Before organisations transform with AI, societies are already forming opinions about what AI is, what it means and whether it can be trusted.

The Pulse Check therefore explores a question that sits upstream of enterprise AI transformation:

> What are influential public figures contributing to the way society encounters and understands AI?

Elite sportspeople are particularly interesting in this context because they combine extraordinary reach with public familiarity, cultural influence and, in many cases, significant levels of trust. Their public commentary, representation and association can therefore form part of the broader environment in which public perceptions of AI develop.

The Pulse Check does not suggest that players should speak about AI, nor does it assess whether they ought to hold a position. It does not judge the quality, correctness or desirability of any position identified.

It asks what is publicly visible, what is not publicly visible, and what those patterns may reveal about the current relationship between influential public figures, public sentiment and AI.

In doing so, the Elite Tennis Player AI Public Voice Pulse Check is more than a study of professional tennis. It is a case study within a broader body of work examining how trust, human relevance and

public understanding intersect with the transformation brought by AI.

Scope and Limitations

This Pulse Check provides a structured observational baseline of the publicly visible AI landscape among the selected elite Players. The findings should be interpreted within the following boundaries.

Public Record Only - The Pulse Check is based exclusively on publicly available and attributable information. It does not seek to infer private opinions, unpublished discussions or views that cannot be established from the public record.

Observational, Not Evaluative - The Pulse Check records what is publicly visible. It does not assess whether Players should speak about AI, whether particular positions are desirable or correct, or the quality or significance of any identified engagement.

Cohort Boundaries - The findings relate only to the 20 Players included within the defined cohort. They should not be interpreted as representative of professional tennis Players generally, women's tennis, other tours or the wider sporting community.

Language and Geographic Coverage -

The review prioritised publicly available material in, or translated into, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and German. Material available only in other languages may not have been identified.

Temporal Scope - The Pulse Check reflects the public record available up to August 2026. AI development, public discussion and commercial relationships are evolving rapidly, and the landscape may change following publication.

Interpretation of Absence - The absence of an identified public AI voice should not be interpreted as evidence that a Player has no views on AI, has not used AI privately or has had no involvement with AI. It indicates only that no qualifying public record was identified within the scope of this review.

The Pulse Check should therefore be understood as a snapshot of observable public activity, not a measure of private opinion or underlying AI adoption.