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Sunday 18/01/2015

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THE MONEY GAME

Tennis stars of the 21st century realise there's a lot more money to be made beyond the base line, as **LUKE DENNEHY** discovered at the first Grand Slam event of the year in Melbourne.

AS the Australian Open tennis show rolls in to town, the glamour players of the sport are making millions more off the court than on.

The Sunday Times has found that the business of being a top glamour tennis player is a world full of sponsor commitments, fashion, red carpets, business meetings, all on top of the hours of training on the court.

While the top five men earn more than the women, the women are the highest paid female athletes in the world by a long way, and not far behind the men.

This week, nearly all of the major players have hit the hustings spruiking various endorsement deals.

World No.1 Serena Williams has been everywhere.

She first launched a new cooling towel that she is personally involved in, called Mission Athletecare EnduraCool Towel, at Rebel Sport in Chapel St, talking also about those now-famous Berlei ads and her love of the Australian sports bra.

On Friday night, she was the special guest at a cocktail party at the Sofitel Hotel, where she is staying.

At 33 she is a world wide megastar, having achieved

everything on the court that is possible.

But even Williams sees the importance of the business of tennis and her brand, and making the best of what she's got.

"For me is about planning for the future, now," she said.

Williams' schedule has been as busy as Maria Sharapova, who hosted a cocktail party for luxury watch brand Tag Heuer at trendy city venue Miss Collins, as well as meeting Mark Webber for Porsche, for which she is an ambassador.

The Russian is a keen and involved businesswoman.

She even has her own confectionary company, Sugarpova.

"I do enjoy it (the

endorsements). It's fun, it gets your mind off your daily routine and gives you a great new experience," she said.

On the men's side, Roger Federer on Friday night hosted a glamorous cocktail party at Crown for Moet and Chandon.

He has long been a global ambassador for luxury champagne.

His rival, Novak Djokovic, has taken over from Andre Agassi for Jacob's Creek, filming a short film that is

designed to be inspirational for the brand.

Meanwhile, Spanish sensation Rafael Nadal was the face in Melbourne of the new tennis format FAST4, playing to a packed refurbished Margaret Court Arena on Wednesday night.

Channel 7 commentator and former champion player Todd Woodbridge said the game of tennis is in a great shape, and a lot of it has to do with the attitude of the top superstar players.

He described them all as great ambassadors.

"I don't know in my time if I've seen two better male ambassadors than Roger and Rafa," he said.

"You wouldn't expect they would get along, but they do and they work so well for the sport together in tandem.

"I've never seen that.

"We didn't see that with a Sampras, or a Lendl or Connors.

"Those guys were superstars, but they weren't as

smooth off the court and aware of their responsibilities.

"I think you have to go back to the Aussie generation of champions in the fifties and sixties to get to that kind of thing."

The future of the sport in Australia is looking very



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bright as well, with many tennis experts tipping big things for a number of men coming through, including the well documented Nick Kyrgios and Thanasi Kokkinakis

TOP 5 EARNING FEMALE PLAYERS



1. MARIA SHARAPOVA - \$24 million

Endorsements: Tag Heuer, Porsche, Nike, Sugarpova

2. LI NA * - \$23.6 million

Endorsements: Nike, Crown

3. SERENA WILLIAMS - \$22 million

Endorsements: Nike, Berlei, Gatorade, Wilson, Miami Dolphins

4. VICTORIA AZARENKA - \$11.1 million

Endorsements: Red Bull, Citizen, Nike

5. CAROLINE WOZNIACKI - \$10.8 million

Endorsements: Adidas by Stella McCartney

Source: Forbes magazine, last financial year 2013-2014

* Li Na now retired, but still set to make millions in endorsements

TOP 5 EARNING MALE PLAYERS



1. ROGER FEDERER - \$56 million

Endorsements: Moet and Chandon, Nike, Credit Suisse

2. RAFAEL NADAL - \$44.5 million

Endorsements: Nike, Babolat

3. NOVAK DJOKOVIC - \$33.1 million

Endorsements: Jacobs Creek, ANZ

4. ANDY MURRAY - \$15 million

Endorsements: Under Armour, Standard Life insurance, Head rackets

5. KEI NISHIKORI - \$11 million

Endorsements: Uniqlo, Adidas, Wilson and Tag Heuer.

Source: Forbes magazine, last financial year 2013-2014.

FUTURE STARS



1. EUGENIE BOUCHARD, 20

Now very familiar with Australians after last year's semi-final run at the Australian Open, all is set for Bouchard to have a long and very lucrative career.

2. NICK KYRGIOS, 19

The young Aussie has two major things going for him - a big game on the court and personality off it.

3. BELINDA BENCIC, 17

Switzerland has a proud tennis history as we all know. The latest potential star to come from the country is Bencic, who is already ranked 17 in the world.

4. THANASI KOKKINAKIS, 18

Kokkinakis recently trained with the great Roger Federer in Dubai, and is tipped rise from his current ranking of 147 to the top 100 sooner, rather than later.

5. BORNA CORIC, 18

The Croatian star on the rise has a tattoo on his right bicep that reads: "There is nothing worse in life than being ordinary."



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Everywhere: Serena Williams in a Berlei sports bra. She says endorsements are about setting her up for the future. Inset: Up-and-coming stars Eugenie Bouchard and Nick Kyrgios.

SERENA WILLIAMS \$22M





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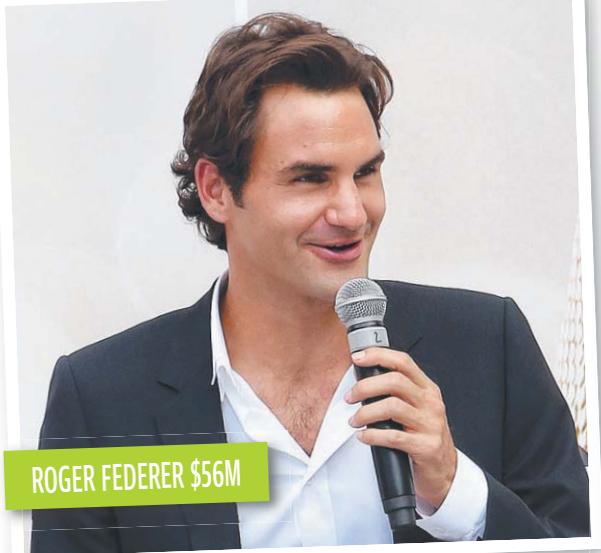
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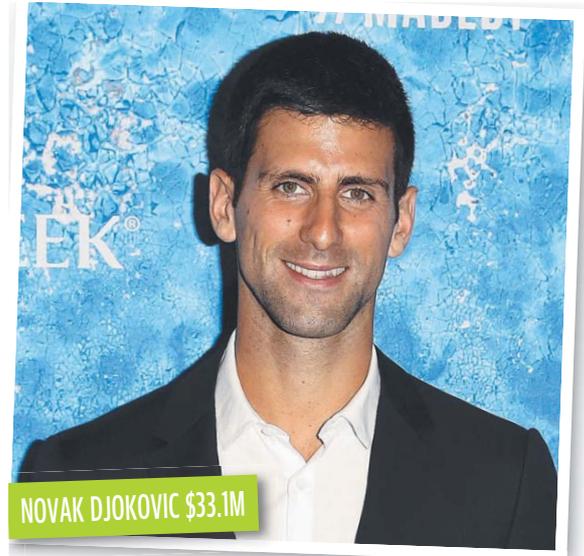
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