



# 20/20

Wimbledon commentator Andrew Castle talks about his love for all things SW19, and recalls the tennis stars and matches of old. Continuing our series with **Specsavers**, Helen Gilbert asks the former British No.1 20 questions in 20 minutes

**A**ndrew Castle is a familiar face in the Wimbledon commentary box. At this year's championships, the 54-year-old, from southwest London, is serving up his 16th year guiding us through game, set and match.

#### How old were you when you started playing tennis?

Nine. A friend and I went to our local park and we played all day. I fell in love with the ball, the racquet, the strings and the game in every way.

#### Was it always your vision to play at Wimbledon?

Yes. It's unique. I used to imagine being some of the players who I eventually got to know and compete against.

#### What's your happiest memory from your days as a junior?

Winning the Under-12 National event at Eastbourne in 1975. I came from a working-class background. There was no money and my parents made sacrifices for me. I can't believe how lucky I was.

#### What is your own standout Wimbledon moment?

My debut in 1986. I was on No. 6 Court playing Australia's Brod Dyke. I remember the first step I took on to the grass. It was like being plugged into the mains, and I played in a daze.

“As I walked on to court, it was like being plugged into the mains, and I played in a daze”

#### What happened next?

I won and a couple of days later faced the No. 2 seed Mats Wilander on the old No 1 Court. I walked through the tunnel, looked up and saw thousands of people bathed in sunshine. In my shock I tripped over the edge of the grass. I lost in the fifth set after being two sets to one up.

#### What advice would you give your younger self?

Focus on improving your physical strength. Also, I wouldn't have spent so much time with my then fiancée – it was a waste of her time and mine. [Laughs]

#### When you were playing, Hawk-Eye didn't exist. What are your thoughts on the technology?

Hawk-Eye [which helps umpires rule whether balls are in or out] has made a huge difference to tennis. You want the person who should win to win.

#### Would any of your matches have played out differently with Hawk-Eye?

Plenty. When I was playing Kevin Curren at Wimbledon, he served a ball on a break point to me that was way out, but it was called good. Of course, bad calls have worked in my favour, too.

#### If you could morph into your ideal player, who would it be?

It would be nice to play like



Roger [Federer] for 10 minutes. I'd also like Rafa Nadal's forehand, John Isner's serve, John McEnroe's volley and the stubbornness of Andy Murray.

#### Who do you enjoy watching at Wimbledon and why?

You need never look beyond the great Roger Federer – he's definitely the boss. And Serena Williams in the Ladies'. This is a woman who by a country mile is the best player of the past 15-20 years.

PICTURE CREDIT TO COME

#### When did you stop playing professionally?

After the 1992 Olympics, at the age of 28. My wife Sophia was expecting our first child and we needed money. Sky approached me to work as a commentator alongside Sue Barker. I was there for eight years.

#### Next came GMTV, where you worked for a decade...

I got a call from the boss who said: "I think you're the man for the GMTV sofa." I was chuffed.

**WATCHING THE BALL:** Andrew Castle has a clear view of Centre Court

#### How was it starting out?

I was sick with nerves. On my first day the autocue bust and I was scrabbling around trying to read off a script.

#### Had you always set your sights on commentating?

I've never had a plan, but I work hard and focus on whatever is in front of me at the time.

#### Has your eyesight changed in your mid-life years?

About three years ago, Sophia and I were in a restaurant and I couldn't read the menu. The print was painfully small and in swirly italics. I now wear lenses to read the newspapers and the computer screens I use at LBC radio when I present shows.

#### Do you wear your lenses for anything else?

I find them helpful for golf, too.

#### You've commentated on 15 Wimbledon finals for the BBC. Which ones rank top?

The 2008 Federer v Nadal final that ended in near-darkness, and the last game of Murray v Djokovic in 2013. There was no air in the place. I remember saying: "Sporting immortality doesn't come easily."

#### In your dream match, who would be on court?

Rod Laver, at his best, against Federer. Björn Borg against Nadal on clay would be fun, too.

#### What are your favourite spots at Wimbledon?

The Gentlemen Members' Dressing Room. It's a privileged space [only a select few have access]. I go in for a lie down and find solitude there. And, of course, the commentary box on Centre Court.

#### Does the future of the sport look promising?

The men's game is currently blessed with stars such as Federer, Nadal, Djokovic and Murray. However, I'm enjoying the progress of Alexander "Sascha" Zverev and Britain's Kyle Edmund.

PROMOTED CONTENT



## Varifocal contact lenses

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Andrew Castle is not alone in experiencing a change in vision. Maybe you are starting to hold things at arm's length to see clearly? Don't worry, it affects most people aged 40-plus and can mean that tasks, such as reading menus, are difficult.

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