

Novak Djokovic taps into the power of meditation for inner peace during Wimbledon 2013

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Sutheera Pflughaupt's face lights up when Novak Djokovic's name is mentioned. She is a kitchen volunteer in the Buddhist centre the world No. 1 visits to meditate and "recharge" between matches at Wimbledon, and over the years they have grown close.



Feeling good: quiet meditation in a Buddhist temple is important to world No 1 Novak Djokovic
Photo: REUTERS

“He stays in the house next door every year, for many years,” she says of the Serb. “I have a photo with him every time. Tomorrow I have tickets for the Centre Court, maybe I will see him play.”

The Buddhapadipa complex is 10 minutes' walk through leafy suburbia from the All England Club, and Djokovic revealed on Thursday evening that he visits several times during Wimbledon fortnight.

“It's very calm and quiet, obviously,” he said. “I stay in a house which is very nearby. We like Wimbledon and London in general because there are so many beautiful parks and nature, places which you can call getaways during these two weeks of a hectic grand-slam atmosphere.”

“Obviously, there is a huge amount of pressure and stress and everything involved, so you need to have a place where you know you can switch off and recharge your batteries. I guess it’s private, in a way. But I just can say that it’s a very calm and very beautiful environment where I like to spend time.”

When he visits, Djokovic tends to pass through the converted house, home to orange-robed Thai monks, and into a temple in the garden, where he meditates for up to an hour.

It is not only the reflective atmosphere that makes it hard to believe this Victorian-era complex is in SW19, with the stars of tennis grunting and slipping through a tournament half-a-mile away.

The house’s living and dining room are filled with candles and golden statues of the Buddha, while the garden contains a water feature donated by the king of Thailand and the inner walls of the temple are so intricately painted it took four years and 25 craftsmen to complete.

The artist behind the 80s redesign apparently wanted to emphasise that Buddhism was relevant to every age – so among the depictions of the Buddha’s life and Nirvana, Djokovic meditates beneath a mural featuring more modern figures including Margaret Thatcher, Colonel Gaddafi and a group of punk rockers.

While the predominantly Thai volunteers are enthusiastic about their Serbian brother in meditation, the monk present at the centre on Friday was not available to talk about the player.

Perhaps that is because the monks themselves are banned from watching any form of entertainment, including tennis – the closest they get being the cheers from Murray Mound which come reverberating around the garden.

Inside the red-carpeted temple, retired Lynne Parry, who now volunteers at the centre full-time, explained why Djokovic might have been attracted to meditation and the teachings of the Buddha. “It’s all about the moment, focusing on the now, not the past or the future. And it’s about people – the Buddha wasn’t a god, he’s a man.”

She also offered a clue as to why Roger Federer has yet to follow his rival in his quest for inner peace. “Non-self is very important idea. It means giving up the ego.”

The Telegraph - Theo Merz