

French Open offers players protection against online harassment

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A sunset over the Philippe Chatrier courts during the French Open tennis tournament at Roland Garros in Paris, France, Monday, June 7, 2021. The French tennis federation said on Monday May 22, 2023, they are making available to all players taking part in this year's clay-court Grand Slam tournament an anti-online harassment tool to protect them from cyberbullying. Credit: AP Photo/Christophe Ena, File

French Open organizers are giving all players access to an online tool meant to protect them from cyberbullying and harassment on social media.

The French tennis federation said Monday the technology developed by a French company will be made available to all players taking part in this year's clay-court Grand Slam tournament. The software uses [artificial intelligence](#) to filter comments posted to [social media](#) accounts and block those that are deemed toxic or abusive.

It said the tool "aims to preserve the players, their mental health, the values of sport and tennis and to banish people who come to spread their aggression and hatred on social networks."

"Tennis being one of the sports most affected by this scourge, athletes can thus be victims in a direct or indirect way," the federation added.

Players and tennis officials can opt to connect their social networks to the technology, developed by the Bodyguard.ai company, before the tournament and keep it in place for at least one week after it ends. Play in the main draw begins May 28 at Roland Garros.

"This way, they won't receive any derogatory comments," the French federation said. "It is an AI that performs moderation in real time. The comment is analyzed in less than 200 milliseconds. A team of linguists creates word structures to update the technology in real time from what is posted on social networks to generate a contextual analysis. The goal is to ensure that nothing is missed, while making sure that nothing is censored."

The different platforms monitored are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and Discord.

"The [mental health](#) of players is a priority issue for the French Open," French federation director Caroline Flaissier said. "There is no place for any form of violence in our tournament."

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