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DOHA GOALS FORUM

# Comebacks not on Bartoli's mind

2013 Wimbledon champion says honoured to be part of 2014 Doha GOALS

By Mikhail Shat  
Doha

**W**hen Wimbledon began this year, it was the first time since 1997 that the champion did not defend her title.

Marion Bartoli retired 39 days after she won her first and last Grand Slam on the grass courts of All England Club in 2013.

"When I started playing in 2003, I knew it would be very, very hard for me to keep playing for a long time," Bartoli told Gulf Times during a telephone interview. "The pain I was feeling every day, how tired I felt every day... So I knew that most probably it was my last year. Thankfully, I think it was my destiny that I won the Wimbledon that year."

She admits that winning a Grand Slam made it easier for her to decide on retirement. "It had been a dream. It made my decision easier but had I been able to play at the highest level, for sure I would have. I wish I had won a Grand Slam earlier and I would have continued playing. Unfortunately I didn't."

Despite the fact that modern power game in tennis took a toll on her body, her belief in the game remains the same as before. "I retired because I had a massive shoulder injury, and my whole body was breaking down. I unfortunately couldn't play at a level I wanted to any more. But I still love the sport and I still love to play the sport whenever I get time. Obviously being a Wimbledon member now [titles] and now also a resident of London, I am spending a bit of time there and am able to play at the Wimbledon courts," she said.

The 30-year-old added: "I think women's tennis is getting more and more interesting. It is also attracting big crowds to watch the game. It is growing. Also, new players coming into the game are of a very high level. It is great to see how it keeps improving."

"We are already in an era where we are



France's Marion Bartoli retired 39 days after winning the 2013 Wimbledon title at the age of 29. (AFP)

playing a power game. We are not going to go back to how it was played a couple of decades ago."

In the WTA Tour interesting enough to entice her back? "No, no, I won't come back. One thing I am sure of is that I will not come back," she asserted.

Bartoli, who was adjudged French Sportsman of the Year last year, is part of a star-studded line-up of speakers who have confirmed their participation at the Doha GOALS Forum 2014 in Doha.

Others in the line-up are former World Heavyweight Boxing Champion and 1996 Olympic gold medalist George Foreman,

Jamaican triple Olympic gold medalist Veronica Campbell-Brown, former Olympic Champion and US Track & Field director Jackie Joyner-Kersey, 1992 Olympic gold medalist Linford Christie and retired German international footballer Christoph Metzelder.

Bartoli has played at the WTA event in Qatar six times and reached the semi-final stage twice - 2011 and 2012. She was recently seen at the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in Paris, where HE Sheikh Jassan bin Hamad al-Thani's horse Terve won the event for the second straight year.

"My relationship with Qatar is extremely good. It is a place where I was playing quite frequently on the WTA Tour. So it is great to be invited to Doha," she said.

On her participation in Doha GOALS, she said: "It's something that I am extremely proud of. I mean I am just 30 years old, and to be asked to speak at this amazing global sports event is a massive honour. I will be surrounded by some of the biggest sports stars. It will be interesting for me. If I can share my experience with those involved, I will be happy."