

Brodies Champions of Tennis – top stars head to the capital



Edinburgh's tennis fans will get the chance to watch some of the world's greatest players at the Brodies Champions of Tennis tournament at the home of Edinburgh Academicals in Portgower Place Stockbridge between Thursday and Sunday.

Planning for this event has gone well and the site is almost complete, ready for the players to take to the court for the first time on Thursday afternoon.

For Tournament Director Viki Mendelssohn, it's the realisation of a long held desire to see top class tennis return to Edinburgh. She said: 'I can hardly believe that 18 months of planning and meetings have come to fruition and we'll see some of the world's top players compete again in Edinburgh.

'John McEnroe is everyone's hero and I'm thrilled that he'll be here this week alongside many other household names from the world of tennis.

'I have always loved the game and I have managed many big events in my career however this is definitely the biggest and the most personal. It has been a real team effort from the moment I first began to think about staging the event. Everyone from the ground staff here at Edinburgh Accies to the volunteers we have recruited to help have been great to work with. So too has our title sponsor Brodies LLP who are to be congratulated for their foresight and enthusiasm in becoming involved. We all share the same desire, to have a successful tournament for Edinburgh and Scotland.

'We do still have some tickets available for most sessions, Saturday is completely sold out. We're looking forward to

welcoming everyone for this inaugural event and I would encourage those who have been taking some time to decide on coming along to book their tickets now.'

The tournament boasts the first ever temporary covered tennis court featuring a bespoke canopy ensuring that rain will not stop play

The event is part of the ATP Champions Tour which brings together many of the greatest tennis players in history for nostalgic, competitive and entertaining tournaments in cities all around the world.

The Champions still take great pride in their fitness, reputations and ability to perform, and so the competitiveness and standard of play is incredibly high. While winning is still a major motivation for players that lived off the feeling during their Grand Slam careers, maturity and a greater understanding of the importance of spectators, media and sponsors has meant that they are able to interact now in a way that they couldn't before. They effortlessly laugh with fans, hang out with sponsors and open up to the media wherever they go.

This event will be played over four days with six men competing against each other in a round-robin format, ensuring that all players feature in at least two matches, whilst three others will play exhibition matches.

The top player from each group contests the final; while the two players who finish second in each group play off for third and fourth places respectively.

Matches are contested over the best of three sets, with the deciding set taking the form of a Champions tie-break. The Champions tie-break is an expanded version of the conventional professional tennis tie-break, whereby the winner is the first player to reach 10 points and lead by a margin of 2.

To be eligible to compete on the ATP Champions Tour, players must have been either a World No. 1 during their competitive playing careers, a Grand Slam singles finalist, or a singles player in a victorious Davis Cup team; and they should have retired from the ATP circuit. Each event can also invite two players of its choice to take wild cards.

The players competing for points include are listed below:

Tim Henman held a whole nation's hopes on his shoulders for nearly a decade, and he carried them well, becoming Great Britain's most successful tennis player since Roger Taylor in the 1970s. Not only did Henman attain a career-high of No.4 in the world and reach an incredible six Grand Slam semi-finals, but he was also a faithful servant to the British Davis Cup team, more than once winning decisive fifth rubbers to keep his country's hopes alive in the competition.

Goran Ivanisevic is best remembered for his long-awaited victory in the men's singles at Wimbledon in 2001 after previously reaching the final three times. Ivanisevic's name is synonymous with his booming serve, which was one of the greatest of all time. He reached a career high ranking of #2, only kept away from the top spot by Pete Sampras. Goran's booming serve is his greatest weapon and for several years, he was the leading server of aces on the ATP Tour

Carlos Moya is one of a small number of tennis players to have reached three of the greatest heights in the sport, winning a Grand Slam singles title at Roland Garros in 1998, reaching the World Number One position the following year, and helping Spain to win a Davis Cup title in 2000.

Thomas Enqvist is a former Australian Open finalist who reached a career-high ranking of number four in the world. For nearly a decade he was one of the most consistent players on the ATP Tour, finishing the year in the world's top ten on four separate occasions thanks to his metronomic and laser-

like baseline hitting.

Greg Rusedski is a former US Open finalist, best known for his big serve and serve-and-volley style of play. After turning professional in 1991, his first career singles title came two years later at the Hall of Fame Championship in Newport, Rhode Island. His best year on Tour was 1997, as, not only did he reach the singles final of the U.S. Open, where he lost to Pat Rafter in four sets, but shortly thereafter he reached his career high ranking of World Number Four.

Mark Philippoussis began his career as one of the most promising and exciting young talents to emerge on the ATP World Tour for many years. In 1995, at the age of 19, he earned himself the award for ATP Newcomer of the year and finished the year as the youngest player inside the Top 50.

The three players who will play exhibition matches are as follows:

John McEnroe is perhaps the most iconic player in tennis history, and one of only a handful from his generation to have transcended his sport. As famous for his temper as for his precocious talent, McEnroe is without doubt one of tennis' all-time greats.

Wayne Ferreira's winning career record against all-time Great Pete Sampras was no accident. The South African is widely considered to be one of the most naturally gifted players ever to pick up a tennis racquet.

Mikael Pernfors played tennis for the University of Georgia in the United States before turning professional, and became the first player since Dennis Ralston two decades earlier to win back-to-back NCAA singles titles in 1984 and 1985. In 1986, just a year after turning professional, Mikael reached his first and only Grand Slam singles final at the French Open. He lost in straight sets to World Number One Ivan Lendl.

The timetable is as follows although all times are approximate.

Thursday Afternoon (First match 1400) Rusedski v Philippoussis and Ferreira v Pernfors

Evening (First Match 1900) Henman v Ivanisevic and Rusedski/Moya v Enqvist/Pernfors

Friday 21 June (First match 1400) Henman v Enqvist and Ferreira/Philippoussis v Ivanisevic/Pernfors

1900 Rusedski v Moya and McEnroe/Henman v Ferreira/Philippoussis

Saturday 22 June (1400) McEnroe v Pernfors, Moya v Philippoussis. Enqvist v Ivanisevic

Sunday 23 June 3 v 4 (1030)

McEnroe v Ferreira (1300)

Brodies Champions of Tennis Final (1430)

Whilst there is no parking onsite Blue Badge holders can park in the local area and there is plenty Pay & Display in the surrounding streets; however organisers encourage visitors to not bring cars and use Public transport instead. Lothian Region buses run regular services to Stockbridge. Spectators arriving by taxi should ask the driver to drop them off at Comely Bank Road (in front of venue) and walk down Portgower Place to the entrance.

The Edinburgh Reporter will be on hand to provide results and analysis of the games.