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New Zealand Premier League Tennis Competition to Launch

Tennis New Zealand & Lavie Tennis Academy are excited to announce the launch of New Zealand Premier League tennis.

Commencing 3 June, the Premier League will be the first professional tennis competition in the Southern Hemisphere since the shutdown of sport due to COVID-19. Several seasoned ATP tour pros are lined up to compete alongside the best up and coming talent in NZ.

All 112 matches, to be played in Auckland without spectators in attendance, will be available to watch either live on Sky Sport or online via the popular Sky Sport Next YouTube channel. The innovative multi-platform broadcast format will allow viewers to follow the entire competition live. "The Sky Sport team is equally excited at the prospect of so much tennis right here in Aotearoa." Tex Teixeira, Sky's Chief Content Officer says, "Live sport is getting back up and we are delighted to support this innovative tournament. 112 tennis matches, in New Zealand, on Sky Sport 9 over three weeks in the middle of winter – Serve, Game On!"

The event will feature 24 players competing across three weeks of round robin and finals play. A team format will be used, with players split into 8 teams of 3. Several NZ Davis Cup representatives will take to the court, including two of the countries most capped players Rubin Statham and Artem Sitak, members of the team who beat Venezuela in March. ATP world number 77 Cameron Norrie, who represents Great Britain and Queenstown's Japanese Davis Cup player Ben McLachlan are also set to take part in the event. Additionally, some of the country's brightest prospects have returned from their respective US Division 1 universities and will be playing alongside touring professionals. The top seeded players will be separated into different pools, ensuring even competition amongst teams.

"I'm really looking forward to playing in the NZ Premier League. It's a great chance for the best players in NZ to play matches again, I've always enjoyed the teams format." said McLachlan.

"The talent pool here in NZ right now is as deep as we are ever likely to see, so this is the perfect time to launch what will be a great series. We're looking to be really innovative and make things as fun as we can for players and those watching at

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home, and with so many great professional players here in NZ right now, the action on court is going to be outstanding.” said Sebastian Lavie, Director and Head Coach of the Lavie Tennis Academy.

The Premier League will be one of the first professional sports events to kick off since the onset of Covid-19 restrictions. With many tennis courts opening under Level 3, players were able to train effectively within their bubble, cutting down the amount of time needed to get competitive tennis underway.

“Training without a goal is not possible for professional and competitive athletes” says Tennis New Zealand’s High Performance Director, Christophe Lambert. “The NZ Premier League offers opportunities for our best players to have a home base competitive environment so they are ready to jump back in when the pro circuit starts again, but also for our younger players to get the experience needed to perform at the highest level.”

An event schedule and final make-up of teams will be released later in the week.

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