

Forbes

Charleston To Host Women's Tennis Event With Four Grand Slam Champions, No Fans



NEW YORK, USA - SEPTEMBER 7: Bianca Andreescu of Canada poses with the trophy after her US Open ... [+]

ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

While no professional tennis tournaments have been held since mid-March, there is hope on the horizon.

Competitive professional tennis will return to Charleston, S.C. next month with the new Credit One Bank Invitational, which will run June 23 – 28 at LTP Daniel Island. The 16-player team event will receive more than 40 hours

of live coverage on Tennis Channel and raise funds for the Medical University of South Carolina's (MUSC) frontline healthcare workers.

The player field includes reigning Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin and reigning U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu, as well as two-time Grand Slam champion Victoria Azarenka, former U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens, Madison Keys, Amanda Anisimova, Monica Puig, Ajla Tomljanovic, Danielle Collins, Alison Riske, Shelby Rogers, Genie Bouchard, Jennifer Brady, Leylah Fernandez and Emma Navarro. Keys and Mattek-Sands will serve as captains for the UTR tennis event.



Sofia Kenin of the US poses with the 2020 Australian Open winner's trophy on the bank of the Yarra ... [+]

“Charleston has proven time and again to be the poster child for resiliency – and in my mind, this special tournament will help accomplish three very critical things: First, it is a tangible way to show the world we are able to bring back live sport for public enjoyment; Second, it allows our community and tennis fans all over to support the tennis professionals whose opportunities to compete this year have been severely limited; Third, it helps us show our frontline medical professionals how much we care, with half of the proceeds

going directly to support MUSC,” said Ben Navarro, Owner of Charleston Tennis LLC.

The tournament will be conducted without fans and will feature 16 singles matches and eight doubles matches. It is currently the largest-scale tennis event confirmed since the sport shuttered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Ever since the unfortunate cancelation of this year’s Volvo Car Open due to the Coronavirus, we have been working tirelessly to figure out how and when to appropriately bring a world class event back to Charleston as quickly and safely as possible,” said Bob Moran, President of Charleston Tennis LLC. “This tournament will have two equal beneficiaries – traditional prize money for the athletes, and a large fundraising structure to support frontline healthcare workers at MUSC.”

The event will work closely with MUSC, who will ensure the execution of a secure environment for all players and staff through its health and safety protocols. To minimize the amount of individuals on-site, players will call their own lines and receive assistance from only one ball kid and one official on court.

“We’re excited that the Credit One Bank Invitational will be held this summer in the South Carolina Lowcountry,” said South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster. “With the NASCAR races at Darlington, we showed the world how to safely integrate live sports back into our culture, and now we get to do it again with tennis. The coordination and cooperation that goes into planning an event like this is immense and the challenges are daunting, but South Carolina continues to set an example for the rest of the country. This is an extraordinary example of perseverance and leadership.”

Already this summer, Wimbledon has been cancelled, while the French Open has been pushed to a Sept. 20 start. The U.S. Open is expected to announce in mid-June whether it will begin on its planned date of Aug. 31 or make alternate plans.

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