



## **2017 Saarlouis Beach Tennis Open**

Press release, Saarlouis, Germany, 28 August 2017: Global beach tennis stars rock Saarlouis.

**A perfect debut – the Saarland region in Germany has established itself as a top-notch beach tennis destination with the exceptional ITF tournament in Saarlouis. Hosted by TSV Ford Steinrausch, the 15,000-dollar competition saw mind-boggling performances by the world’s leading beach tennis players in front of a cheering crowd in what was a perfectly organised event in a unique urban environment. As one of the initial supporters of the event, Klaus Bouillon, the regional minister of the interior, emphasised the significant potential of this competition that put the German town on a par with other international beach tennis destinations. And the athletes set the bar high as well. Tommaso Giovannini and Nikita Burmakin emerged victorious from the men’s competition. In the women’s event, Joanna Cortez and Rafaella Miller from Brazil triumphed over their competitors. The German Championships, which took place at the same time, saw Benjamin Ringlstetter/Maraike Biglmaier take first place in the mixed event, while Biglmaier/Kemkes won the women’s competition, and Benjamin and Manuel Ringlstetter took first place in the men’s event.**

Expectations were high for the defending world champions Luca Carli and Michele Cappelletti. “We want to win in Saarlouis,” Carli had said before. But the event had something different in mind for the Italians. In a spectacular match that lasted almost two hours, the world champions were defeated in three sets (4:6, 6:1, 4:6) by their compatriot Tommaso Giovannini and his Russian partner Nikita Burmakin. The fans rewarded the contestants with standing ovations, having been treated to what was arguably the most exciting match of the tournament.

In the beach tennis tournament with the highest prize money in Europe, the runner-up world champions Luca Cramarossa/Marco Garavini then battled it out against Tommaso Giovannini/Nikita Burmakin. The center court burst at the seams with a cheering crowd of 600 in a match with clear-cut roles. While the Italians focused on long rallies, their competitors led a relentless offensive battle – a successful strategy as the tall Russian’s hard serves proved at times to be an insurmountable obstacle for the Italian duo. After 1:05 hours of thrilling beach tennis action, and with a score of 6:4 6:3, Tommaso Giovannini/Nikita Burmakin seized victory at the final ITF event in Saarlouis to take home the \$15,000 prize money.

In the women’s finals, the runner-up world champions Sofia Cimatti/Flaminia Daina from Italy took on Joana Cortez/Rafaella Miller. As the 2016 world champions, the two Brazilians beat the defending world champions Baccetta/Gasparri from Italy with a 6:0, 6:4 result in the semi-finals. However, they stood no real chance against Cimatti/Daina in the final event where the Italian duo took first place with a score of 6:2, 6:1.

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From a German perspective, all eyes were on Benjamin and Manuel Ringlstetter who exceeded all expectations. Despite their 2:6, 1:6 defeat against the vice world champions Luca Cramarossa/Marco Garavini in the quarter-finals, fans and competitors alike congratulated the amateur athletes on their outstanding performance in the 47-minute match against the Italian pros. "We were off to a good start but we were not able to score in the critical moments. It was impossible to maintain such a high level for so long," Benjamin Ringlstetter said. Nevertheless, the two German athletes earned themselves standing ovations from a cheering crowd for a particularly impressive rally in the second set.

Beach tennis in the middle of a city – this unique experiment proved successful with the ITF tournament in Saarlouis, Germany. "We've really enjoyed playing in the middle of the city. It was fun, and the atmosphere was amazing," runner-up world champion Luca Cramarossa commented on the event. Trucks had brought 400 tons of sand to create the three courts in the market place in Saarlouis, and about 600 fans were able to enjoy the perfect conditions on the center court.

"It was a fantastic tournament. I am convinced that this event has great potential for expansion over the next few years," Klaus Bouillon, the regional minister of sports and the interior, said. "The German Championships were the beginning – the European and the World Championships are to follow."

Marion Jost, mayoress of Saarlouis, was among the spectators during almost every match and was excited about the event and the fans' reactions. "This has been an absolutely unique event here in Saarlouis. I am really enthusiastic about it and have only received positive feedback. I would like to thank all the employees of NBS (Neuer Betriebshof Saarlouis) who made this event possible," the mayoress said.

The German Tennis Federation (DTB) also recognizes the discipline's potential to become a trend sport. DTB vice-president Reiner Beushausen considers the concept to be 100 percent successful. "Events like this appeal to a young audience and we need young people for beach tennis. This was something for everyone, not on a remote beach somewhere, but right here in the middle of the city with a great atmosphere and food and drink stands." Andreas Julien, chairman of TSV Ford Steinrausch, which hosted additional matches, agreed. "It might have been a bit more intimate here, but no less exciting. We had a lot of fun and would like to thank all the volunteers who made this beach tennis weekend possible."

Local hero Maraike Biglmaier not only won the mixed and doubles' titles in the German Championships. The unique talent also excelled at the 15,000-dollar ITF tournament.

After a nine-month injury layoff, the 30-year-old bounced back just weeks ago to take second place in the World Championships. While she lived up to expectations in the German Championships with Benjamin Ringlstetter in the mixed competition and beach tennis newcomer Laura Kemkes in the doubles' event, Biglmaier also scored highly with her new partner Katharina Palenicova from Slovakia. "It was quite a good performance given that we never had played together before," the German number one said, having just returned to competition following an arm injury. "I hope it wasn't too much for my arm." In the quarter-finals on Saturday, Biglmaier/Palenivoca beat the fourth-seeded Italian athletes D'Elia/Visani in a tight three-set battle. However, their winning streak was to come to an end on Sunday morning against the vice world champions Sofia Cimatti/Flaminia Daina who showed their class and won the semi-finals 6:3, 7:5.

Full results are available at: <http://beachtennis-saarlouis.com/en/live-scoring-results/>

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