



Beach tennis world elite back on court in Saarlouis

Press release, Munich, 21 August 2018

After the huge success of last year's premiere, the world's best beach tennis players are set to meet once again from 23 to 26 August in the German region of Saarland for the ITF Beach Tennis Open Saarlouis, where they will battle it out for world ranking points and a total prize fund of \$15,000. The tournament organisers have managed to attract the reigning men's and women's world champions Antomi Ramos Viera/Mikael Alessi from Spain and as well as the all-Italian female duo of Sofia Cimatti and Flaminia Daina – reigning European champions. The defending champions from last year Nikita Burmakin (Russia) and Giovannini Tommas (Italy) are competing again. German interest comes Maraike Biglmaier, Germany's most famous and successful beach tennis player, who will be competing alongside her Brazilian partner Rafaella Miller, defending champion from last year. The brothers Benjamin and Manuel Ringlstetter, are in with a good chance of a strong result in front of their home crowd.

The German town of Saarlouis will this year once again host one of the most prestigious beach volleyball tournaments in Europe as it welcomes the ITF Beach Tennis Open Saarlouis for the second time. The event will also be the setting for the German Beach Tennis Championships, the most important national beach tennis tournament in Germany. After the end of competition each day spectators will have the chance to have a go themselves, with the courts being opened up to the general public to give everyone, no matter what age or ability, the chance to try out this fun and action-packed sport. Come along, have a go and see why beach tennis is one of Germany's fastest-growing sports! And, of course, no good beach party would be complete without good music and a chilled vibe.

The concept behind the ITF \$15,000 tournament in Saarlouis is widely considered as being the future of this relatively young sport which was invented in Italy and is normally played on some of the world's most beautiful beaches. In Saarlouis the games take place not on a natural beach but in the town centre, on the Kleiner Markt square, where beach tennis meets urban chic. As well as the main ITF tournament, highlights in Saarlouis will include the German Beach Tennis Championships, the Saarlouis Amateur Cup, beach tennis for kids and, of course, the chance to train with members of the German national beach tennis team. From experienced pros to ambitious amateurs and complete newcomers, in Saarlouis there will be plenty for everyone. Spectators enjoy free admission to all the matches.

Minister of sport for the Saarland region, Klaus Bouillon, is looking forward to the event. "As regional minister responsible for sport here in Saarland I am particularly happy that this tournament offers a good platform for this young, dynamic and fast-growing sport to become more popular and well-known," he explains. "As was the case last year, spectators can look forward to exciting matches between the world's best players. Locals will also get the chance to have a go themselves and try out the sport of beach tennis. I can promise that it will be an unforgettable sporting experience with a great atmosphere on the Kleiner Markt square in the heart of Saarlouis."

Work has been underway since the start of the week to transform the pretty square in the centre of the town into a beach tennis paradise. For the main Centre Court and three further courts a total of 400 tonnes of sand is required. The organisers have also constructed stands with seats for 600 spectators as well as a Players' Lounge and an expo area where the beach tennis industry can showcase all its latest products and innovations. For four days the quiet town of Saarlouis on the French-German border will be transformed into a beach tennis mecca.

"I myself used to compete in sports competitions at a high level, so it is a particular pleasure for me to assume the patronage of the 2nd ITF Beach Tennis Open in Saarlouis. I am sure this event will not only raise the profile of Saarlouis but also continue a long tradition of successful sporting highlights in the town. I wish all those involved – players, spectators and guests from near and far – four exciting days of world-class action on the Kleiner Markt square. Come along and experience for yourself the special flair of Centre Court packed with over 600 fans.

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I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers and the many sponsors, without whom this event would not have been possible," comments Raphael Schäfer, member of the Saarland regional parliament and patron of the event.

Without a doubt one of the highlights of the four-day tournament will be the Saturday night games under the floodlights. "It's such a cool feeling to play in front of a full stadium in the centre of the town and to hear the fans cheering you on," said Maraike Biglmaier last year. The 31-year-old Berlin native, who in 2017 was still feeling the effects of a long-term injury, is now back to full fitness.

Taking place alongside the ITF \$15,000 tournament will be the German Beach Tennis Championships featuring 21 men's teams, 13 women's teams and 23 mixed teams. Some of the most exciting action in the past has come in the mixed category, where reigning champions Maraike Biglmaier/Benjamin Ringlstetter will be looking to defend their title from 2017 but will face tough competition from the likes of Manuel Ringlstetter and Laura Kemkes. Kemkes will also be looking to defend her women's doubles title. In the men's doubles it is the duo of Benjamin and Manuel Ringlstetter who are the men to beat. Dr Eva-Maria Schneider, vice president of the German Tennis Federation, comments ahead of the tournament: "We are delighted that in PLAN B we have a reliable and professional partner by our side to help us further develop this young sport in Germany. Last year's championships in Germany marked a successful start to our cooperation. Now we want to follow on where we left off and get even more people interested in beach tennis."

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