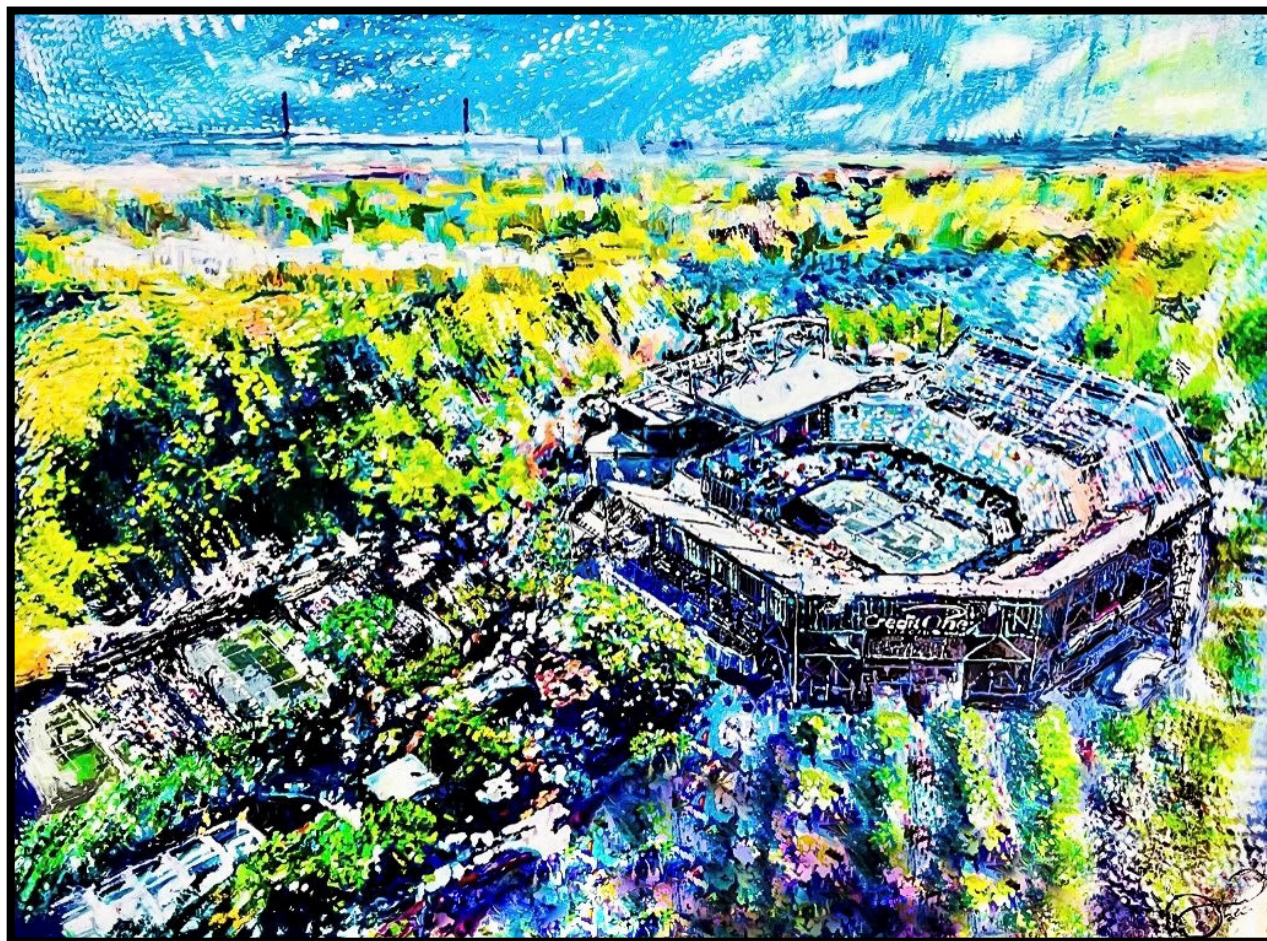


State of the 'Art' stadium

2023 Charleston Open engages fans through art

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ART BY TED DIMOND ART

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Photos from Family Weekend



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Jessica Pegula shares heartfelt letter



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Jeff Church: Operations maestro



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Ted Dimond – A life in color

Renowned sports artist puts work on display at Charleston Open

VICKIE BERNIE

news@thedanielislandnews.com

Talk about seizing the moment!

Ted Dimond is a renowned sports artist, especially in the world of tennis. He was also a professional tennis player and coach with a passion for developing new players.

During the pandemic he took advantage of his art training and painted. Somewhat conflicted as to where to focus his main energy, a terrible car accident made the decision for him. His painting became an important part of a long, painful recovery.

“Tennis is my first passion and this was my way to still be part of the game. This is who I am and what I do now, and the accident

really perpetuated that. It gave me a reason to really keep going.”

Chatting over the phone with Dimond (and his bestie, a black poodle) during his routine morning coffee and croissant at a café near his Manhattan home, he was upbeat, enthusiastic and thrilled to be coming to Charleston for the duration of the Credit One Charleston Open.

“I’m excited to celebrate women’s tennis at the oldest, continuous women’s tournament in America,” Dimond enthused.

He is also eager to explore Charleston and try some of the many recommendations that he

See **ARTIST** on **PAGE 13**



DOUG PINKERTON

Artist Ted Dimond unveiled a painting of Ukrainian tennis player Elina Svitolina at the Credit One Charleston Open on Sunday. Svitolina hosted a special Tennis Plays for Peace Pro-Am on Sunday, April 2, benefitting Ukraine and the Elina Svitolina Foundation. The Tennis Plays for Peace initiative seeks “to bring the tennis community and fans together to support the humanitarian relief efforts for the war in Ukraine.”

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Former tennis player designs unique tennis art

received.

Gearing up for a 16-hour day of painting, he said that he is working on aerial views of the beautiful new stadium that reflect the mood and energy of the atmosphere.

Dimond's style is a process that creates an abstract, three-dimensional finish. It is a distinctive, synthetic layering technique that captures the players in motion.

"I have developed a method where I have two, three or four layers, which not only creates a lot of depth and color, but also a unique sheen to my work," Dimond said. "The layering technique works so well that if I need to correct something with the aesthetics, I can put a layer on top and the one underneath still shows through. It enables players to sign right over the piece without damaging the painting."

The players' signatures play an important part of bringing specta-

tors around his work as well as bringing a special reminder of particular tournaments.

As his work is celebrated throughout the world by fans and players alike, signed pieces are continually auctioned off to raise money for various charities.

Although Dimond likes his work to be flowing and abstract, he said he is still a perfectionist. When asked how long a painting takes to finish he says: "Until I get it right."

Frequently, tournaments use Dimond's works as trophies for the players. He provides the paintings for the first- and second-place winners. Since no one knows for sure who will go to the final, he typically works for 24 hours straight after the semifinals to make the paintings for the finalists.

"Sometimes I try to guess but I've only been right once!"

Dimond explained that you

might think that some of the players would be so jaded with the trophies and checks they win, but that they actually really appreciate the paintings. He tries to paint something that is iconic for each particular player.

"It's so cool when they are really wowed by them. I truly want to celebrate the greatness of these players."

When asked about what it is like to work with Federer and Nadal, he answered, "Roger and Rafa – the pair! You can't go wrong with any image you paint of these two guys. Their energy and athleticism are indeed great."

Dimond said that commissions are a big part of his work and he creates so many portraits of both men for customers, often having to do one of each to keep peace in families who are divided by which player is their favorite.

From ARTIST on PAGE 12



PROVIDED

Ted Dimond is a former tennis player and coach turned sports artist.

One commission that he is particularly proud of is a painting of Stan Smith that he did commemorating the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Open at Forest Hills.

"You don't have to be a top 20 in the world to have one of my paintings, though."

Dimond has a working studio in Manhattan but said that his gallery is on the road where he creates paintings. "I am my own gallery," he said. "I have found the best of both worlds. I am passionate about

what I do. If you have one of my paintings on your wall and wake up in the middle of the night, I want you to feel like you have to duck because the ball is coming right at you."

You can learn more about the artist and his works at teddimondart.com.

Note: Dimond graciously allowed the paper to use his art on the cover and inside cover of the tennis section in this week's paper.

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photo by Glenn Raus

APRIL DONATION

This month's donation goes to the Grateful Goldens Rescue of the Lowcountry (ggrlc.org). Donation & photo credit in support of Glenn Raus.

Family Weekend at the COCO is a grand slam!

ALL PHOTOS BY DOUG PINKERTON



Fans enjoyed swanky accommodations as they watched the 2023 draw at Match Point Bar & Grill.



Audrey Trask slides into action!



Ella Reed tosses a tennis ball.



Mariah Johnson concentrates as she hits the tennis ball.



Thomas Crawford chases down bubbles!



William Urban gets a face tattoo.



Live music is a hit at the Match Point Bar & Grill.



Anna Grace Anderson meets Ariel, Belle and Spiderman at family weekend during the 2023 Charleston Open.



Professional tennis player Zhang Shuai delights fans by signing autographs.



Intensity! Kenzie Vincent lines up her toss.



Otto Chern has a unique balloon animal!



Selin Habu gets her face and arm painted to make a stylish look to match her hairbow. A face paint artists creates a unique look for Sophie Williams.



Scarlett Minervin slides into action.



William Walker throws softballs.



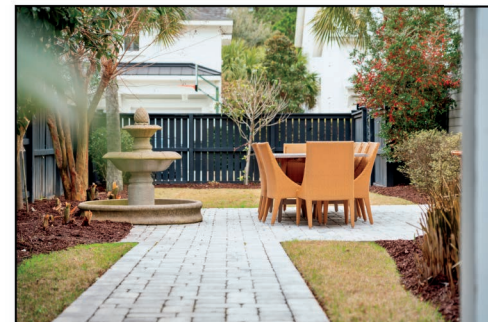
Balayage, a technique where color is applied freehand to the surface of hair, was a highlight for many during family weekend. Here, Maddie Melton gets some blue streaks.

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Game-changing tennis injury prevention, treatment techniques



PROVIDED BY LOWCOUNTRY ORTHOPAEDICS

Tennis is a high-impact sport that puts stress on bones, joints, and muscles. Quick pivots and repeated swinging action contribute to the risk of injury. These prevention and treatment techniques can help.

Tennis elbow is caused by repetitive actions. Dr. Patterson Owings, a Daniel Island resident and hand surgeon, noted the best way to prevent tennis elbow: “Use proper techniques when hitting the ball and to use a racket that is appropriate for your skill level.”

Sprained ankles are caused by twisting or rolling the ankle during a quick change

of direction. Foot and ankle surgeon Dr. William Corey advised, “Proper training and conditioning can help prevent ankle sprains, as can wearing supportive shoes and ankle braces.”

Shoulder injuries are common in tennis. Dr. Adam Schaaf, a sports medicine physician said, “Players should strengthen their rotator cuff muscles to prevent shoulder injuries and use proper technique when hitting the ball. Mix your serve up to avoid repeating the same motion. Train, stretch, and mobilize both sides of the body.”

Knee injuries can be prevented by strengthening quadriceps and hamstrings and wearing proper footwear. Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Richard Zimlich explained that if surgery is needed, new surgical techniques lead to shorter recovery time.

Lower back pain prevention starts with strengthening core muscles and using proper technique. “Low back pain is pervasive among active men and women alike. While degenerative lumbar spine conditions are common in the general population, there are unique considerations when diagnosed in

high-level athletes like those competing in the Charleston Open,” spine surgeon Dr. Don Stoval said.

GAME-CHANGING TENNIS INJURY TREATMENTS

Many tennis injuries can be prevented with proper training, conditioning, and techniques. If rest, ice, and over-the-counter pain medication are ineffective, seek an orthopedic specialist consultation.

Physical Therapy is often the first line of treatment for tennis injuries. “Physical therapy involves targeted exercises and stretches designed to improve the affected area’s strength, flexibility, and range of motion,” explained occupational therapist Marielle McLaurin.

Cortisone injections are often effective for reducing pain and inflammation in tennis elbow or rotator cuff tendinitis cases. “This treatment method injects a powerful anti-inflammatory medication called cortisone into the affected area to effectively reduce pain and inflammation and quickly relieve symptoms,” said orthopedic surgeon Dr.

David Jaskwich.

Surgery may be necessary for tennis injuries unresponsive to conservative treatment. Sports medicine physician Dr. David Johannsmeyer said, “Surgical procedures can repair torn tendons or ligaments, correct bone fractures, or remove damaged tissue.

Platelet-rich Plasma Therapy (PRP) is a regenerative treatment option involving injecting a concentrated solution of a patient’s blood platelets into the injured area. This treatment speeds the healing process by delivering growth factors to the affected area. Daniel Island resident and interventional pain specialist Dr. Shailesh Patel said PRP “is used for treating tennis elbow, rotator cuff tendinitis, knee, and other sports injuries.”

Stem Cell Therapy involves injecting stem cells into the affected area to promote the healing and regeneration of damaged tissue.

If you are a tennis player experiencing pain or discomfort, consult a qualified orthopedic specialist to explore the best treatment options.

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Dr. Christina Church,
DMD

Charleston Open serves earthquake relief to Turkey, Syria on every ace

ZACH GIROUX

zach@thedanielislandnews.com

Every ace counts a little more at this year's Credit One Charleston Open. For each, a sizable donation will be made to provide emergency relief for those impacted by the catastrophic earthquakes that struck Turkey and Syria in February.

On Feb. 6, a magnitude 7.8 quake killed nearly 46,000 people total between the two countries, according to the Associated Press.

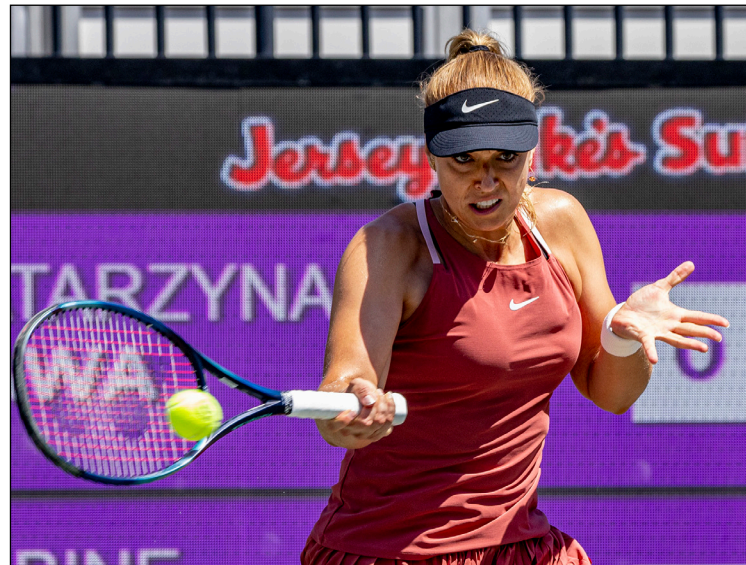
Tennis' top authorities have teamed up to help aid survivors of the natural disaster that killed tens of thousands of Turks and Syrians and left hundreds of thousands homeless. In response to the devastation, the Women's Tennis Association, the Association of Tennis Professionals, the International Tennis Federation and the four Grand Slams have united to launch Tennis Plays for Love – a

fundraising campaign to support those impacted by the tragedy.

The Charleston Open has partnered with WTA Charities in support of Tennis Plays for Love to raise money for Global Giving's Turkey and Syria Earthquake Relief Fund, helping provide aid and fuel long-term recovery efforts. The tournament will donate \$100 for every ace made by a player during the tournament.

"We're truly a global sport," said Charleston Open Director Bob Moran. "We play in every part of the world. Our players come from every part of the world. So if something happens like that it affects not only the players."

A couple weeks after the Charleston Open, the WTA was scheduled to host a tournament in Istanbul, Turkey. This year's WTA 250 Istanbul Cup has been canceled due to the inoperable facilities caused by the destruction.



DOUG PINKERTON

Former Charleston Open champion Sabine Lisicki (2009) hit 25 aces in her two qualifying matches. As a result, not only did the German make it into the main draw, her aces resulted in \$2,500 donation to earthquake relief.

Last year's Charleston Open saw 444 aces, in which 99 came in single qualifying, 312 in the singles main draw and 33 in doubles,

according to tournament officials. By these standards, the donation amount would equal \$44,400.

The donation funds will come

directly from the tournament's charity budget. Moran noted that there is no set end goal. "The more aces the better, that's how we look at it."

"Enough will never be enough, but whatever we can do to support and help we want to do our part," Moran added.

Tournament attendees will be able to stay up-to-date on where the donations stand throughout the tournament via video boards around the grounds.

Of the players in this year's Charleston Open draw, World No. 8 Veronika Kudermetova had the most aces in 2022 with 265. Other heavy hitters to watch in this year's draw include Daria Kasatkina and Belinda Bencic.

There are no Turkey or Syrian players competing in this year's tournament. The last player from either to compete was Çağla Büyükakçay in 2017.

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I want to talk to you about my mom

BY JESSICA PEGULA | WTA WORLD NO. 3

Editor's Note: WTA tennis star Jessica Pegula's mother and father own the NFL's Buffalo Bills. Many know the story of how CPR saved the life of Buffalo Bill's player Damar Hamlin. This is the story of how CPR saved Pegula's mother's life. Reprinted with permission from The Players' Tribune. You can find the original story here: bit.ly/3G3ytIQ.

It all started in Australia after the incident with Damar Hamlin. I texted my husband, Taylor, that the situation with my mom was weighing on me. When can we start talking about it? When can I tell her story, my story, my family's story? Everyone just keeps asking me. I really need to get it off my chest.

This is a story about my mother, my family, and the past year.

In June 2022, I had just flown back to Florida from the French Open. I made the quarterfinals in singles and the finals in doubles. It was an amazing two weeks full of a lot of positives, including cracking the Top 10 in the world. A few days after I got home, I got a call around midnight (on my mom's birthday) from my sister Kelly who was staying at my parents' house. Something was wrong with our mom, and she was headed to the hospital in an ambulance. My mom was asleep when my dad woke up to her going into cardiac arrest and she was unresponsive for quite a while. My sister gave her CPR until the ambulance arrived. She saved her life. Even though she doesn't like to take credit for this terrible situation, she absolutely saved her life, followed by the critical job performed by the paramedics who arrived and were able to restore a heartbeat.

Now, rewind to about three months before that. Kelly called me one day and said she was going to get her CPR certification as a requirement for a job she wanted. I said, "No way, I have been meaning to do

that but haven't gotten around to it." She relayed to me how nervous she was about it and hoped she passed the class. I remember her telling us what she was doing in our family group chat, and my mom even responded, "Nice Kells! Now if we have a heart attack you can revive us."

So here we are in the hospital. They figured out what was wrong, they fixed it, but the big question was how she would be when she woke up. Our concern had now moved from the cardiac arrest to a brain injury. Not to mention all the other issues that come with both of those events. Breathing, swallowing, preventing infections, there are so many things that can go wrong. The most frustrating thing about these types of injuries is that the outcome is unknown. Experts base it on how long the brain was without oxygen, and how one responds to commands at the earliest stages, but it is very difficult. It was a waiting game.

We lived in that hospital for basically two weeks. We took shifts, we brought each other food, we knew all the nurses and doctors, we even knew their schedules. We had to force my dad to go home and sleep, but most of the time he didn't. He would go sit in his car to get away or come to my house. He didn't want to go back to their house unless my mom was back with him. When they say one day in the hospital equals a week to recover, that is no joke. We were all mentally and physically exhausted.

Around the second week I decided to try and practice a little. It was more just to get away from the hospital and focus my mind somewhere else. I had already decided I was missing most of the grass season, but I still wanted to play Wimbledon if I knew my mom was OK. My dad didn't want me to play, but I knew my mom would be upset if I skipped because of her. So, if the timeline worked out, I was going to play.

Luckily, she made small improvements, she moved out of the ICU after about a



PROVIDED BY JESSICA PEGULA

WTA World No. 3 Jessica Pegula (right) with her mother, Kim Pegula.

week, and into an in-patient care facility. She was aware, talking a little, but a long way from her normal self. After a long two weeks, she was in a good set-up to start her recovery which we knew would take a very, very long time. Three of my best friends are doctors and after the situation calmed down, they told me that it was a miracle she was even on her way to recovery, as did every other doctor who worked with her.

I went and played Wimbledon and won my first two rounds. I was sick with a nasty

sinus infection, probably from the stress of what had happened and living in and out of a hospital for two weeks. I had to deal with a lot of speculation and questions surrounding her health, even shutting down rumors that she had died. It wasn't necessarily the most fun Wimbledon experience I remember. I had a few good wins, and I was proud that I was able to go out and compete considering the situation.

Today, my mom is still in recovery and although it is the same answer every time

someone asks me, it is true, she is improving every day. She is dealing with significant expressive aphasia and significant memory issues. She can read, write, and understand pretty well, but she has trouble finding the words to respond. It is hard to deal with and it takes a lot of patience to communicate with her, but I thank God every day that we can still communicate with her at all. The doctors continue to be blown away by her recovery, considering where she started, and her determination is the driving force of that.

My mom is the president and owner of both the Buffalo Sabres and Buffalo Bills. She loved to work. She did everything and our family constantly told her how she needs to slow down and take time for herself. She was the woman behind my dad's success and my dad would happily admit that. She jumped into this journey with him and learned many lessons along the way, breaking a lot of barriers. She was the shift in culture, positivity, and the heartbeat of many of the employees. She gave everyone so much of her time and effort. She lived it and loved it, and it was felt by everyone she met. Now we come to the realization that all of that is most likely gone. That she won't be able to be that person anymore.

My mom always wanted me to be involved, she wanted me to learn and eventually do what she was doing. She always told me to wait until after tennis was done. I would always press her to give me more responsibility, to let me be more involved, because I wanted to help.

So now here I am, with my family, trapped in discussions about her care, caretakers, doctors, therapy and that which seemed like the least important, my tennis career. All of a sudden, your world gets flipped upside down and you have no idea what the #*\$# is going on. Our family is involved in a lot — the sports teams, businesses, investments, and my mom liked to be very hands on with it all.

Of course, what came first was that it was a family tragedy. Now add on top of that all her responsibilities and it became extremely overwhelming for everyone involved. We try to be a private family, and it is hard going through something so horrible that seemed so public. My dad had to take on a



PROVIDED BY JESSICA PEGULA

WTA World No. 3 Jessica Pegula (far left) and her family at the Buffalo Bills' stadium.

lot of her responsibilities, which was hard for him, especially because the outcome of her health was still unknown.

xSuddenly, I went from "Let's celebrate top 10 in the world" to "Do I need to start thinking about my career after tennis a lot sooner than I thought?" "Does my dad and family need help?" "Maybe I should just go back to school and work for the family." I am 28 and I take pride in being able to handle every situation thrown at me, but this was A LOT.

In November 2022, I was able to win my first WTA 1000 title in Guadalajara, Mexico. Before the finals, I was uncontrollably crying in the locker room. I am not a big crier, but I cried. It wasn't even sad tears, it was almost happy, because I just had this feeling I was going to win. In my acceptance speech I dedicated it to my mom. I wanted her to know that even after a terrible six months, I still fought every day because of her. If she could fight through what she was going through, I could too. She cried during my speech and trophy ceremony.

I have wanted this career since I was seven years old, before the sports teams, businesses, money, etc. My parents have helped me achieve this dream I am living. Even though we didn't always agree, they pushed me, and I pushed back, and it got me to where I am today. My mom deserved to see me lift a trophy after what she had

been through.

Then in January we came to some bizarre, messed-up, full circle moment. Buffalo Bills player Damar Hamlin suffered a cardiac arrest on the field during the Monday night game against the Cincinnati Bengals. My stomach sunk because it felt like the exact same thing all over again. I was sitting on the bench for a tennis event in Sydney, Australia. I wanted to throw up. I was supposed to go on for mixed doubles in 15 minutes and I remember telling one of my teammates, "I am a little freaked out right now, this is too close to home, and I feel like I am going to have a panic attack."

Again, I usually don't get too much anxiety, but the thought of what Damar and his family were about to go through hurt my heart. I knew how important time was. I just kept thinking time, time, time, time. I hope they got him back and quick enough. The medical staff and trainers who assisted that night really saved his life and were tremendous in his recovery. I ended up going on for mixed doubles and we won.

Going into the 2023 Australian Open, I decided to wear the number 3 patch to honor Damar Hamlin. Ironically, yes, I was ranked No. 3 in the world. However, it didn't feel like it was just for him, it felt like it was for my mom as well. To see the attention it garnered in Australia, across the world, in a different country, just reminded me why I love sports and the beauty of

coming together.

Some of my close friends who know every detail of what has happened tell me, "I don't know how you have made it through the year, let alone finished No. 3 in the world." I just say I have no freaking clue. I guess one thing I learned from the past year is it can be a great year, and a bad year, both can be true.

My mom is working hard in her recovery, she is improving, but where she ends up is still unknown. Luckily, we have some amazing people around us who have been crucial in helping her and without them I am not sure where our family would be.

As people have gotten to know me more on court, and through interviews, they always tell me how calm, cool, and collected I am (for most part haha). I definitely get that from my mom (sorry, Dad). I like to think that our similarities helped prime me to deal with the obstacles of the past year.

I [wrote] this throughout the Australian Open as a sort of therapy whenever I [felt] some anxiety or just the need to vent. I didn't know what my result would be but before I left, my mom told me to "take it seriously," which my family and I laughed about because we weren't quite sure what she meant. But like she always told us, "If it's meant to be, it's up to me."

It has been a tough year but at the same time I feel lucky and blessed. I am thankful she is still with us when other families may not have been so lucky. That she even had a chance at recovery when the first week in the hospital seemed so dim. Thankful for the doctors that aided in her recovery. Thankful that she is now home, that she gets to watch the Bills, Sabres, and my tennis matches. She never watched my matches before, because she got too nervous. Now she watches all of them.

Thank you to the Buffalo community for your patience. I know you have wanted answers and it took us a while to get there but it finally felt like it was time. Thank you to everyone who has respected privacy and shown me and my family tremendous support throughout this ongoing journey.

Reprinted with permission from The Players' Tribune. You can find the original story here: bit.ly/3G3ytIQ.

TECH-SAVVY TENNIS

Several COCO players utilize digital tools to achieve peak performance



ELIZABETH BUSH
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Professional tennis players have an arsenal of tools they can use to maximize their athletic performance. Top notch coaches, trainers, and medical experts are just a few of them. But additions to the digital realm are sparking what some have dubbed a “tech revolution” in the sport, giving players potentially game-changing information.

There’s the WHOOP strap, a 24/7 personalized digital fitness and health coach that the WTA Tour approved for use during competition in 2021. The device straps

to the wrist and helps players analyze health and performance data. Real-time biometric stats from the strap can even be incorporated into WTA broadcasts during matches.

Another wearable gadget - the Catapult OptimEyeS5 sensor - fits into a vest and promises to deliver “unique and reliable insights” into a player’s performance. The Oura Ring keeps track of a variety of bodily functions, such as sleep, temperature, and heart rate.

The data provided through these devices, and others like them, is intended to provide athletes hyper personalized analytics that could lead to a competitive edge – and



Rogers



Badosa



Bencic



Jabeur



Keys



WHOOP/WTA

American pro tennis player Sloane Stephens is pictured here wearing a WHOOP strap, a 24/7 personalized digital fitness and health device that tracks performance and health data. Stephens signed on to be a brand ambassador for WHOOP in 2021, when the company partnered with the WTA to become the first wearable fitness technology for match play. She will be back on Daniel Island this week competing for the 2023 Credit One Charleston Open title (she won the event in 2016).

better overall health. In fact, at a conference hosted by the WTA and its lead global sponsor Hologic in 2021, some of the world’s most renowned female athletes gathered with healthcare experts to discuss the challenges facing women, but also new opportunities that are enabling them to prioritize their well-being both on and off the court. Among those taking part in the event was WHOOP VP of Performance Science Kristen Holmes.

“There’s been a historic lack of athletic performance research on women’s health which has put our knowledge of female physiology far behind that of male,” stated Holmes in a press release. “But we are working together to empower women with personalized, actionable insights.”

Many of the evolving tech offerings are scoring big points with pro athletes, including some of the elite players competing in this year’s Credit One Charleston Open. Several of the top seeds in in the tournament shared their thoughts on whether or not the devices are serving up good results.

“I’ve worn WHOOP kind of on and off,” said U.S. player and World No.22 Madison Keys, the

2019 COCO champion. “Honestly, since they came out, even before the tour and them had a deal, I loved using them. I think it’s a lot of really good insight. I’ve also tried the Oura Ring and I’ve done the heart rate monitor. I’ve basically done anything and everything. I think it’s really important and... even more than just the tennis aspect of it, I think it’s such a unique way to kind of check in with your body.”

For Keys, who is playing in Charleston for the 10th time, seeing daily data on her sleep patterns, her recovery, and more, has been advantageous.

“I think all of us athletes are constantly looking for ways to just have that 1% that can help us,” added Keys.

Belinda Bencic of Switzerland, the 2022 Charleston Open champion, has used the WHOOP strap, a “smart vest” and other devices to perfect her game.

“I think tennis has developed, also the fitness part of it has developed for sure,” said Bencic, who is back on Daniel Island this week to defend her title. “...I think it’s great to track the sleep...Also, the running, your explosivity, the

strength, but also the balance between your body. So it’s all these tests you’re doing and then you have to maintain all year to work with this information.”

But Bencic cautions that it’s important to not become overwhelmed with the data. To keep it from becoming too much, she doesn’t look at her health data day to day. Instead, it is sent directly to her fitness coach.

“I think it’s very good when there is new things that are helping us, but also we cannot overanalyze everything,” added Bencic. “We have to use it, but not go crazy with all the information...and sometimes you have to still listen to your own body.”

Ons Jabeur of Tunisia, who is currently World No. 5 and seeded No. 2 in this week’s tournament, is also a fan of paying attention to what your body is telling you, as opposed to relying on technology.

“I have tried it, but I honestly didn’t like it much,” said Jabeur, when asked about wearable technology. “I’m trying other things, but for me I feel like it’s good to have like the heart rate and everything...I’m someone that is very aware of their body. So I feel

like I need to just like go with my sensations, you know, and push with that, and of course we do a lot of tests to see what’s happening. But for now, I’m not wearing WHOOP or any other (device) full time.”

World No. 33 Paula Badosa of Spain also prefers to keep things a bit more old school when it comes to maximizing her game. The Charleston Open competitor is currently not utilizing any wearable technology and instead is sticking to traditional training methods.

“I have no idea, because I don’t know what they do,” stated Badosa, who is one of the tennis talents featured in the new Netflix series “Breakpoint.” “I know some players use it, but I don’t really know...I’m not informed.”

But Charleston’s hometown hero Shelby Rogers, who entered the 2023 Charleston Open as the No. 18 seed, is firmly planted on the tech bandwagon. She started using the WHOOP strap in 2016.

“It’s great insight for the players. I think it could be a cool tool to give fans some insight as well... Handling the data the right way

is super important. But if we can get that under control, I think it’s absolutely a fantastic thing... It gives you insight into how you’re sleeping, how you’re performing, how you manage your day to day recovery. And I think for a lot of people, it can help your mental health. It can help just overall well-being.”

Rogers’ fellow American player Sloane Stephens, the 2016 Charleston Open champion, signed on to be a brand ambassador for WHOOP in 2021. According to a WTA press release, Stephens, who is also in Charleston for this week’s tournament, believes that the strap has given her more knowledge than she’s ever had in her career about what’s happening with her body.

“The WTA’s partnership with WHOOP goes beyond tennis and has the potential to change the way players approach personal health,” she stated in a press release. “We’ve never had access to technology like WHOOP during matches – it’s definitely a game-changer.”

“I think athletes are always looking for an upper hand and different ways to get insight into their own game and improve the way that they’re performing,” added Rogers. “I mean, that’s not a secret. Every athlete is trying to get the newest, the best, the biggest, whatever it is, and I think WHOOP has done a really great job of developing a tool that’s easy to use for everyone, not just athletes.”

GOING GREEN

FRANK CONWAY

news@thedanielislandnews.com

It's that time of year again, and some of the world's best tennis players are here on Daniel Island to compete in the Credit One Charleston Open. Much has been done onsite to prepare for a successful tournament, and one of the most critical tasks has been the extensive care and maintenance of the courts on which this competition will take place. After all, every serve, each bounce of the ball, and every step, slide or lunge a player makes is affected by the



FRANK CONWAY

Charleston Open's green courts benefit from the state-of-the-art by Har-Tru "HyQ" irrigation system. The HyQ system uses a network of PVC pipes, underground bladders (typically six per court) and a high-tech control system to monitor and precisely maintain uniform court hydration.

condition of the court.

According to Robert Eppelsheimer, facilities director for both LTP Daniel Island and LTP Mount Pleasant, a lot of work

goes into keeping the courts in top shape.

Eppelsheimer, who has been working at the Daniel Island site since its beginning some 23 years

ago, said last year there was a major upgrade to the court irrigation system, installing the state-of-the-art Har-Tru "HyQ" system.

Har-Tru green "clay" courts aren't actually clay. They are finely crushed green basalt (rock), and their playing characteristics are very sensitive to their moisture level. Perhaps you noticed in years past that courts were primarily moistened by sprinkler systems. Then they had to dry out before being groomed for use. The new HyQ system has put an end to that.

While the initial financial outlay was significant, the new irrigation system makes long-term sense in many ways. Rather than spraying water over the court and losing much of it to wind, evaporation and runoff, the HyQ system uses a network of PVC pipes, underground bladders (typically six per court) and a high-tech control system to monitor and precisely maintain uniform court hydration. Eppelsheimer estimates that some four miles of PVC piping was

placed to supply the new court bladders. The result of this underground system is better overall moisture control, less pooling, and reduced water usage. HyQ is even controllable via an easy-to-use cell phone app.

Perhaps the biggest win the HyQ system offers is increased court availability. Conventional sprinkler systems might require two hours of drying time before courts can be raked again and ready for play. The new system feeds water from below the court, maintains a constant moisture level and allows the court to be re-groomed and ready for use in 15 minutes. Not only can tournaments proceed more quickly, but LTP Daniel Island is able to offer more courts to more players faster than ever before.

That's a very nice "return." Advantage, LTP.

Frank Conway regularly contributes a nature column to The Daniel Island News.

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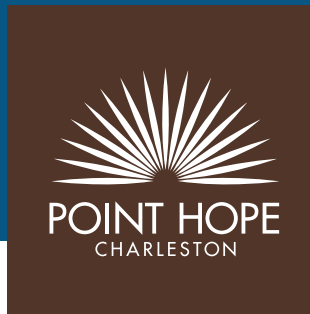
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Jeff Church: Charleston Open's behind-the-scenes maestro

MISTY JO NEILSON

news@thedanielislandnews.com

Twenty-three years ago, Jeff Church began working on Daniel Island alongside a giant hole in the ground. From his office trailer next to the future Credit One Stadium, Church served as the liaison between the construction company building the venue and the City of Charleston.

Now director of operations and stadium events for the Credit One Stadium, Church is the guy who manages most behind-the-scenes happenings for the Charleston Open tennis tournament, concerts, and other festivities. He's responsible for the layout and installation of tents and trailers, bleachers and furniture, stage gear and power generators, and the safety of all structures. During events, he oversees TV production, stadium security and medical services before directing teardown and cleanup at the end of the night.

"You have to be the leader of the orchestra and manage who's coming and who's going at all times," he said. "Everything else is a matter of adding all the nice touches that we always do to make it a world-class event."

Since Feb. 13, when his crew began setting up for the 2023 Credit One Charleston Open, the largest women's-only tennis tournament in North America, Church has had one day off from work. Fortunately, he likes to stay busy.

"The best thing is, for tennis or concerts, just to see that people are here enjoying themselves," he said. "We're on the entertainment side of the business, so to see all your hard work come to fruition and for people to smile and enjoy themselves and say the place looks wonderful; that's the perk of the job."

Since the stadium's \$50 million renovation was completed in 2022, Church's priority has been to keep the state-of-the-art facility in tiptop condition, especially in the days leading up to the Charleston



PROVIDED

Jeff Church, left, is the director of operations and stadium events for Credit One Stadium. Pictured with tournament director Bob Moran, Church works to keep everything running smoothly behind-the-scenes at the Credit One Charleston Open.

Open, when he is busy orchestrating the steady stream of contractors, forklifts, and landscaping crews and making sure nobody drives over the grass.

The world's best female tennis players have noticed his efforts. The Credit One Charleston Open was recently named the Women's Tennis Association 500 tournament of the year, an honor bestowed by the players who voted among top-notch tour stops around the world. The pristine stadium, stellar staff and southern hospitality were cited as reasons for the accolades.

"Before the new stadium it was a matter of trying to do things outside the box and bring in fresh ideas to make the players comfortable and want to come back," Church said. "A lot of players love this tour because, one, the City of Charleston, and two, the way we take care of the players and how they're treated when they're here."

See **JEFF CHURCH** on **PAGE 27**

Church manages tournament operations

From **JEFF CHURCH** on PAGE 26

Credit One Stadium is owned by the City of Charleston and managed by Charleston Tennis, LLC., which funded the renovation as a gift to the city. The makeover attracted a bevy of new events, including 22 concerts last year, and added to Church's vast array of responsibilities. On concert days, he arrives at the stadium at 5 a.m. when the caterers and the gear trailers start unloading, and doesn't leave until the last truck rolls out the gate as late as 2:30 a.m. the next morning.

"Every show is different; they all have their quirks," said Church, who thought the best concert was Elton John because he is a "true legend," and the nicest crew was with Kenny Chesney, who had 17 tractor trailers, 10 buses, and one steal truck unloaded the day before the performance and had everything out in 90 minutes at the end of the concert. "They have the record for most tractor trailers and getting them out the fastest."

After the concert season ended last fall, Church's duties transcended to winter sports when he was asked to construct and manage a holiday ice-skating rink, shipped new from

Switzerland with no installation instructions, in the center of the stadium.

"It was tasked to me by our ownership, and I said, 'yeah we can do that,'" said Church, who then had to go online to get certified in installing and managing an ice-skating rink. "Seeing the kids out there having a great time and enjoying themselves was something that made it all worthwhile. It was very successful; it was the buzz of the island."

The buzz this month is the 2023 Charleston Open, now in full swing, and the world-class tennis players competing on center court. The event is expected to bring more than 90,000 attendees to Daniel Island over its nine-day run, culminating in the championship matches April 9.

"The first year it was a novelty and everyone had smiles on their faces," said Church, who noted that ticket sales were up last year with the debut of the new stadium and that sales have increased again this year. "Obviously they liked what they saw and they're coming back to do it again."



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Charleston's sweetheart Rogers gets engaged before play heats up

PHILIP M. BOWMAN

sports@thedanielislandnews.com

Shelby Rogers looked radiant, dressed in her Fila warmup suit, as she held court Monday afternoon during an informal roundtable with media members in a lounge at the Credit One Stadium, home to the Credit One Charleston Open.

Rogers was tan and seemed rested for what has turned out to be a hectic return to her hometown. And the smile, she couldn't stop beaming.

So you can only imagine how radiant Rogers will look on her wedding day as she walks down the aisle. Her engagement to professional hockey player John Slavik March 31 was one of the big topics at the roundtable.

Just in case inquiring minds want to know, they both are 30-year-olds and have been a couple since 2020. They met on a blind date that was facilitated by mutual friends, according to a sundry list of social media reports.

Last Friday night, Slavik got down on one

knee at the Battery and proposed. Rogers, who had teared up before they even arrived, put her hands to her cheeks in disbelief and said yes. Slavik lifted his bride-to-be off her feet toward the heavens.

"I did have a little hunch that something might be going down because my boyfriend was, sorry, my fiancé," Rogers said. "We left the hotel (and) the driver went the opposite direction. So I was like, OK, this is clearly not going to Magnolia's. We went downtown to the Battery right there by the water which was absolutely beautiful."

Rogers' hunch proved right when she saw a photographer waiting to record the romantic connection.

"I started crying already before he said anything," Rogers said. "And I was like, let me fix my dress for the pictures."

Since then, life has been happening at a blurry pace.

"Aside from the excitement and the emotions, I've had a lot going on here with the media and appearances and people want to



PETER FINGER PHOTOGRAPHY

Shelby Rogers talks about tennis, technology and her engagement at Media Day.

see me," Rogers said. "Actually one of my best friends had her bachelorette party (last) weekend and I was like, 'whoa, I'll try to make an appearance. I love you. Um, I got a lot going on.'"

Rogers added, "My WHOOP was happy with my sleep performance."

Rogers is quite busy these days with the engagement and playing on the WTA Tour. She found time to participate in the Charity Pro-Am for Ukraine relief at the tennis center March 26.

The Credit One Charleston Open teamed up with WTA Charities and Elina Svitolina by hosting a charity Tennis Plays for Peace Pro-Am for Ukraine relief, benefitting the Elina Svitolina Foundation. Svitolina, who owns 16 WTA titles, is Ukraine's top women's tennis player. Her off-the-court focus is bringing awareness and support to her home country during the war in Ukraine.

Rogers was scheduled to play fellow American Danielle Collins, who is the 13th seed, April 4 in a first-round match.

"Over the years of playing here, I have learned that win, lose, draw, injured, foul, cry, whatever it is, my city will always support me and they will be proud of me no matter what happens," Rogers added. "So I am very thankful for that and it gives me a lot of freedom to go out and just be myself and play my game and have fun with it."

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Fans just want to have fun at the Charleston Open



DOUG PINKERTON

Tennis fans were treated to the “Fan Experience” by facilitators Kyle Faessler, Chris Mullen, Milinda Zegas and Juliana Drechsel.

MARIE ROCHA-TYGH

marie@thedanielislandnews.com

Exciting tennis matches may be the main draw at the 2023 Credit One Charleston Open, but there’s lots more to keep fans entertained. Along with watching the world’s best women tennis players, attendees can engage in a variety of tennis challenges, meet up with friends to shop, listen to live music, or grab some cool refreshments.

Interested in checking out your tennis skills? Head to the USTA Play Tennis Fan Zone and get your game on. This year’s activities include everything from the Speed of Serve Challenge to a virtual tennis court maze.

Christy Miller, a USTA member, is part of the excitement off the court as a volunteer at the Fan Zone. “Volunteering at the tournament not only allows volunteers to become part of a dedicated community, but also enjoy the thrill of working at a world-class sporting event...I would encourage anyone who has the chance to participate in this event to take advantage of the opportunity.”

Susan Wright looks forward to the annual event; she has attended every tournament since moving to the island in 2010. From watching the intense competition and the

spectators to doing some shopping, Wright says it’s one of the most exciting times on the island.

“It’s like the official start of spring the years that the weather cooperates. And there’s people watching with everyone sporting the first new spring fashion. Southern Tide had a lovely collection of clothing,” she said.

In the mood for music? Check out the Lowcountry favorites at the Charleston Open’s Charleston’s Living Room. Greenville native Kylie Odetta is honored to be featured as one of the artists performing this year. “I can’t wait to celebrate women in tennis and play music that hopefully enhances the experience for attendees and players alike.”

Bernie Bell says the Charleston Open tennis tournament is his favorite week on Daniel Island, a great time to reconnect with old friends over good food and fine champagne.

“The nine days spent watching riveting tennis matches while dining on delicious food and sipping on bubbly Monet champagne creates a relaxing and enjoyable

See **FANS** on **PAGE 31**

COCO keeps fans engaged

From FANS on PAGE 30

atmosphere that lends itself to socializing and bonding.”

Laura Hughes and her family attended the Charleston Open last year for the first time and found out not all the excitement is in the stands. “We had some food and drinks, took pics, and even did some shopping before the event,” Hughes said.

Wrigley Valle attended Monday’s tournament and was excited about the fan interaction. “The tournament is such an open environment. Just to see the players walking around with their coaches is really cool.”

Meredith Myles loves the welcome feeling of the family oriented event. “They have tons of activities for the kids. Plus, when you see the players they’re super open to taking pictures or giving autographs.”

The Bryant family loves bringing their two daughters, Madison and Autumn, because the event makes them feel included. Madison is especially excited about the games. “I love doing tennis and love mazes. And obviously I’m looking forward to testing my swing!”



PHOTOS BY MARIE ROCHA-TYGH

The Bryant family loves bringing their two daughters, Madison and Autumn, to the tourney.



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2023 CREDIT ONE CHARLESTON OPEN

Play Tennis Trivia Presented by Atlantic Properties

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Enter this week's Tennis Trivia Presented by Atlantic Properties for your chance to win two General Admission tickets to the Credit One Charleston Open finals on Sunday, April 9. Below are the questions. To be eligible to win, you must enter online by Friday, April 7 at 5 p.m. at bit.ly/CO-COTrivia2_2023.

1. Since 1973, the Credit One Charleston Open has been a women's professional tennis tournament. The first five non-repeat tournament champions are in alphabetical order by first name: Chris, Martina, Pam, Rosie and Tracy. What was Rosie's last name?

- a. Goolagong
- b. Wade
- c. Casals
- d. Cheeks

2. Who is the Operations Manager for the tournament grounds and facilities?

- a. Eleanor Adams
- b. Bob Moran
- c. Jane Baker
- d. Jeff Church

3. What two island businesses/school parking lots are being used for tournament parking?

4. What does "Ace" mean in tennis?

- a. DI Club and Bishop England
- b. Benefitfocus and Bishop England
- c. Blackbaud and Benefitfocus
- d. Publix and Blackbaud

5. This artist paints pictures of tennis players using an abstract, three-dimensional finish:

- a. Ted Dimond
- b. Heather Jones
- c. Andy Worhol
- d. George W. Bush

6. Who is the World No. 1 in women's tennis?

- a. Aryna Sabalenka
- b. Jessica Pegula
- c. Iga Swiatek
- d. Serena Williams

7. When Rosie Casals won the first

Charleston Open, she took home \$30,000 in prize money. How much will the winner of this year's tournament earn?

- a. \$250,150
- b. \$120,150
- c. \$1,250,250
- d. \$50,150

8. What does "Deuce" mean in tennis?

- a. A player double faults on service.
- b. When the score in a tennis game is tied at 40-40.
- c. A player hits the ball twice before it goes over the net
- d. Nickname for the World No. 2 player

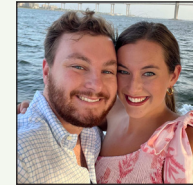
9. What women's tennis player holds the most Grand Slam titles?

- a. Serena Williams
- b. Steffi Graf
- c. Chris Everett
- d. Margaret Court

10. The last five tournament champions are, in alphabetical order by first name: Belinda, Daria, Kiki, Madison and Veronika. What's Veronika's last name?

- a. Kasatkina
- b. Mars
- c. Bertens
- d. Kudermetova

Cade Gossett wins first round of tennis trivia



Cade Gossett and his wife Emily

Cade Gossett won last week's Tennis Trivia Presented by Atlantic Properties and takes home two tickets to the finals in the Credit One Charleston Open.

Cade, who lives on Daniel Island with his wife, is finishing his second year of law school in Charleston.

He added, "We have been playing a ton of tennis and pickleball. We look forward to attending many more events at Credit One Stadium."

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. The three players committed to play in this year's tournament that are from the lowcountry or trained on Daniel Island are: Shelby Rogers, Jessica Pegula, Emma Navarro.
2. This year is the 51st playing of the Credit One Charleston Open (previously played under different sponsor names).
3. The original named sponsor of what is now the Credit One Charleston Open was Family Circle Magazine.
4. Belinda Bencic won last year's tournament.
5. The Credit One Stadium as a green clay surface.
6. At the time this question was asked, Aryna Sabalenka was the top seeded player in this year's tournament. She withdrew because of injury and now Jessica Pegula is the top seed.
7. Elna Svitolina is the Ukrainian player, formerly ranked World No. 3, who was granted a Wild Card to this year's tournament.
8. "Advantage" is the word used to describe a player's score after a game goes to deuce and she will win the game if she wins the following point.
9. Sofia Kenin is the former Australian Open Champion was awarded a Wild Card to this year's tournament.
10. When referencing the score, "love" is the equivalent of zero.

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PHOTOS BY PETER FINGER PHOTOGRAPHY



Sloane Stephens



Ons Jabeur



Madison Keys



Shelby Rogers



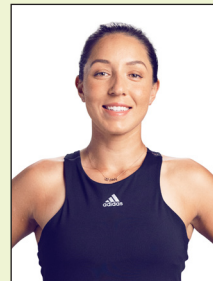
Paula Badosa



Belinda Bencic



Emma Navarro



Jessica Pegula

- A** Is an Olympic Gold Medalist.
- B** Started a charity called "A Lending Paw," an organization that connects distressed people with rescued and trained service animals.
- C** Was born in New York City.
- D** Would have been a hockey player if they weren't a tennis player.
- E** Favorite movie is "The Imitation Game."
- F** In her youth, she snuck into the Family Circle Tennis Center
- G** Her mother was a collegiate swimmer.
- H** Speaks Arabic, English and French.

Answer Key: Emma Navarro (f), Jessica Pegula (h), Ons Jabeur (n), Belinda Bencic (a), Madison Keys (e), Paula Badosa (c), Sloane Stephens (g), Shelby Rogers (d)

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- APRIL 11: New swimmer registration begins
- APRIL 18 – 19: New swimmer evaluation at Pierce pool
- APRIL 22: Kick off breakfast
- MAY 2: Practices begin! (ages 7 and up)
- MAY 15: Practices for 5 and 6 year olds begin
- MAY 24: Team dinner and time trials
- JUNE 1: Morning practices begin
- JUNE 26: 6 and under Mega Meet
- JULY 7-9: City Meet
- CCAA meets to be announced soon

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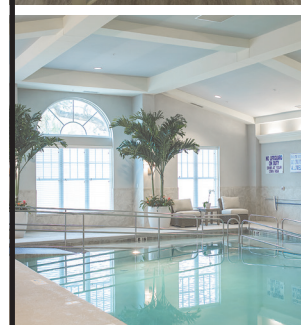
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