

Press Release

5 APRIL 2019

Leading British tennis stars head to the North East as the LTA stage World Tennis Tour event in Sunderland

- **Free entry to watch world-class tennis in Sunderland from 8-14 April**
 - **Brits Harriet Dart and Liam Broady head entry lists**
- **LTA providing more opportunities for British players to compete at home, and opening tennis up to fans around the country**

Sunderland will play host to leading British tennis players next week as the LTA stages a World Tennis Tour event in the city.

Taking place from 8th – 14th April at Sunderland Tennis Centre, British tennis stars Harriet Dart (British no.4) and Liam Broady will be amongst top British players in action, as they hope for success on home soil. The pair, who both played at Wimbledon last year, are part of a strong British contingent taking on players from around the world – with Brits such as Naomi Broady, Maia Lumsden, Laura Robson and Jack Draper also set to step foot on the indoor courts.

Both the women's and the men's events have a total prize money pot of \$25,000, and are a part of the new ITF World Tennis Tour. The Sunderland indoor event is part of an expanded international calendar of tournaments being staged by the LTA in Britain this year, providing a showcase for tennis outside of the traditional summer grass court season and opening up the sport to more fans around the country. The move also aligns with the LTA's new long-term Performance Strategy with the aim being to provide more opportunities for British players to compete, earn ranking points and win prize money in this country.

British star Harriet Dart – who reached the semi-finals of the mixed doubles at Wimbledon last year, will be among the favourites to take the Sunderland women's title, with the 22-year-old going into the tournament as the highest ranked player at 136 in the world.

Speaking ahead of the tournament, GB No.4 Dart said: *'I'm looking forward to playing in Sunderland. I got my first WTA point there when I was 15 so I'm excited to be back there – it would be great to have some local fans come along to support!'*

Dart will face tough opposition from France's Oceane Dodin, a former top 50 player who is coming back from an injury strewn 2018. Meanwhile, in the qualifying draw is Great Britain's former world top 30 player Laura Robson, who is aiming to work her way back up the rankings after hip surgery at the end of last year.

In the men's draw, Lancashire's Liam Broady, will be hoping for a good showing, as will 17 year old Jack Draper who reached the Boy's Singles Final at Wimbledon last year before going on to become the first 16 year old to break into the world's top 1,000. There is also local interest with Durham & Cleveland's Jonny Binding set to play in the men's Qualifying Event.

Julie Piper, the LTA's Tournament Director for the event, said:

"We're looking forward to staging another international tennis event at the excellent facilities of Sunderland Tennis Centre as part of the LTA's work to open up tennis to more people. The warm

and friendly welcome we receive in the North East always makes this event very popular with the players and officials.

With free entry for spectators throughout the week, this is a fantastic opportunity for North East locals to see some of the names they recognise from Wimbledon in action.

Many of the world's current best players have used these kind of events as the springboard towards reaching the very top, so this is great chance to see some future stars in the making too!"

Qualifying is scheduled for Monday 8 April, with the main draw starting on Tuesday 9 April. Finals will take place on the weekend with the doubles finals on Saturday 13 April and both singles finals on Sunday 14 April.

Entry for spectators is free of charge throughout the week, with play from 10am – 7pm. Live scoring and streaming will be available on the LTA website at www.lta.org.uk/gbps.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Provisional entry lists can be found at the links below. Final entry lists will be confirmed on Sunday.

- Men: <https://www.itftennis.com/procircuit/tournaments/men's-tournament/info.aspx?tournamentid=1100045338>
- Women: <https://www.itftennis.com/procircuit/tournaments/women's-tournament/info.aspx?tournamentid=1100045251>

ABOUT THE LTA:

The LTA is the National Governing Body of tennis for Great Britain. We are here to govern and grow tennis, from grassroots participation through to the professional game. Our vision is "Tennis Opened Up" and we're on a mission to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable. We work with schools, with volunteers, with coaches and with venues across the whole country. We also represent the interests of over 590,000 Members, men and women, girls and boys, playing on more than 23,000 courts. The LTA runs and supports a network of 11,500 approved tournaments for players of all ages, the four corner-stones of which are the premier grass-court events leading up to The Championships, Wimbledon: the Nature Valley Open (at Nottingham), the Nature Valley Classic (at Birmingham), the Fever-Tree Championships (at The Queen's Club, London) and the Nature Valley International (at Eastbourne). For further information about the LTA and tennis in Britain, visit www.lta.org.uk or follow us on Twitter @the_LTA