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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **TEAM CANADA TIED WITH BELGIUM 1-1 AFTER FIRST DAY OF BILLIE JEAN KING CUP QUALIFIERS TIE**

***Fernandez soars past Wickmayer 6-0, 6-3, while Marino falls to Bonaventure 4-6, 6-4, 6-4***

**Vancouver, BC, April 14, 2023** – The opening day of the Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge Qualifiers concluded on Friday with Team Canada presented by Sobeys and Belgium all square at one win apiece. It will all come down to the second and final day of the Qualifiers tie on Saturday, as the first country to three wins will clinch a spot in the prestigious Billie Jean King Cup Finals.

In the opening match, Leylah Annie Fernandez, Team Canada's top-ranked singles player, took on world No. 190 Yanina Wickmayer. Fernandez, who entered the week as the 50<sup>th</sup> ranked player in the world, played an outstanding match, dictating points on her serve and standing her ground in her return games. She won 62 per cent of total points and finished the match with 17 winners compared to her opponent's eight. Wickmayer, who rolled her ankle in the first set, managed to finish the match, which went the way of the Canadian 6-0, 6-3.

"It means a lot to me [to start the tie with a positive performance]," said Fernandez in her post-match press conference. "Belgium is a super tough team and to get the win was very important for us to start off the weekend. I'm glad I was able to perform well and help my team as much as possible."

Playing in front of her hometown crowd at the Pacific Coliseum, Rebecca Marino got her 2023 Billie Jean King Cup campaign off to a strong start, breaking Belgian's top-ranked player Ysaline Bonaventure's first service game en route to claiming the opening set 6-4. However, Bonaventure raised her game in the second set, and was able to win the second set and then the deciding third set to tie things up at 1-1 in the Qualifiers tie.

"That was definitely a challenging match and I feel like Ysaline showed her fighting spirit," said Marino after her two-hour and 21-minute bout. "That's something that frequently comes out at Billie Jean King Cup, when you're playing for your country you fight until the end. So, kudos to her. I'm also quite proud of that match, I feel like I fought really hard and didn't give up until the end. A lot of back and forth, we definitely have a bit of rivalry going on right now."

"We're tied at 1-1 but I really believe that we're in a good position," said Canada's captain Heidi El Tabakh. "Tomorrow's a new day. I think the girls played and fought their hardest today. We're going to rest, regroup and come back at it tomorrow. We're ready to battle and I do feel confident for tomorrow, so does the team. So, we're looking forward to it."

The Canadian team will be back on the court tomorrow and will be broadcast live on Sportsnet NOW as well as OLN and TVA Sports 2. Here is the schedule:

### **Saturday, April 15, 2023**

Leylah Annie Fernandez vs. Ysaline Bonaventure – 2 p.m. Pacific  
Followed by Rebecca Marino vs. Yanina Wickmayer



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Followed by Gabriela Dabrowski / Leylah Annie Fernandez vs. Kirsten Flipkens / Greet Minnen

### **About Tennis Canada**

Founded in 1890, Tennis Canada is a non-profit, national sport association with a mission to lead the growth, development and promotion of tennis in Canada and a vision to be a world-leading tennis nation. We value teamwork, passion, integrity, innovation and excellence. Tennis Canada owns and operates the premier National Bank Open presented by Rogers WTA and ATP Tour events, four professional ATP and ITF sanctioned events and financially supports four other professional tournaments in Canada. Tennis Canada operates junior national training centres/programs in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Tennis Canada is a proud member of the International Tennis Federation, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, and serves to administer, sponsor and select the teams for Davis Cup, Billie Jean King Cup, the Olympic and Paralympic Games and all wheelchair, junior and senior national teams. Tennis Canada invests its surplus into tennis development. For more information on Tennis Canada please visit our Web site at: [www.tenniscanada.com](http://www.tenniscanada.com) and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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