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GENIE BOUCHARD HEADLINES SPEAKERS AT TENNIS CANADA'S MENTAL HEALTH PANEL DURING THE NATIONAL BANK OPEN

- *Canadian star to be joined by mental health experts and other prominent athletes*
- *Mental Timeout initiative supported by Beneva returns to NBO in Toronto and Montreal*

[TORONTO, ON] Wednesday, July 17, 2024 – Genie Bouchard will headline a panel discussion during the National Bank Open presented by Rogers (NBO) that focuses on recognizing mental health as a crucial part of an athlete's performance journey and how far we have come in breaking the stigma around mental health in tennis. Alongside the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), Tennis Canada and a panel of experts, including top WTA stars, will highlight the progress that has been made and the measures that have been put in place to ensure that tennis players feel safe, heard and supported.

"When we announced our mental health strategy earlier this year, we reiterated our commitment to becoming a leading voice in the mental health narrative in Canadian sport," said Tennis Canada CEO Gavin Ziv. "As athletes increasingly feel comfortable enough to share their struggles with mental health, we wanted to honour that willingness to break the taboo by partnering with the WTA to talk about the pioneering work of both organizations."

The discussion will take place at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, August 6 on site at Sobeys Stadium, in the Premium Series Lounge, located in the VIP Lounge presented by Audi, and will be available to all Premium Series ticketholders to attend. The following panelists are set to take part:

- **Sharon Fichman, host** – Former No. 21 in doubles on the WTA Tour and 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games athlete
- **Dr. Randi Jackson** - WTA Mental Healthcare provider, PhD in Sport and Performance Psychology
- **Marie-Josée Bellemare** - Tennis Canada's Wellness Director. At the forefront of the implementation of the Mental Health Strategy
- **Mikaela Papich** - PhD Candidate in Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa. Mishi collaborated with Tennis Canada to design implement and evaluate its Mental Health Strategy
- A to-be-confirmed star of the **WTA Tour**
- **Genie Bouchard** – 2023 Billie Jean King Cup champion, 2014 Wimbledon finalist and former World No. 5
- **Joel Dembe** – 2012 London Paralympic Games athlete

"I was honoured to be asked to participate in this important discussion on mental health," said Bouchard. "A few years ago, we would not have been able to be so open about our struggles away from the court, and thanks to the hard work of Tennis Canada and the WTA, we are now in an environment where not only can we talk more freely about it, but we know where to go for help. I hope I can share my experiences so that it becomes even easier for the next generation."

In February, Tennis Canada, in partnership with the University of Ottawa, Own the Podium, the Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS), and Game Plan, became the first National Sport Organization (NSO) to unveil an NSO-wide [Mental Health Strategy](#) based on the [National Mental Health Strategy for High Performance Sport in Canada](#). The pioneering strategy is based around the three pillars of Promote, Support and Care.

Mental Timeout initiative supported by Beneva returns to the NBO in Toronto and Montreal

Within the Promote pillar sits Tennis Canada's game-changing Mental Timeout initiative supported by Beneva, which launched at the 2022 National Bank Open in Toronto and Montreal and is back again this year. 2019 US Open champion Bianca Andreescu, 2022 Davis Cup winner Alexis Galarneau, and Canada's top-ranked wheelchair player Rob Shaw are all returning as ambassadors for the project this summer.

"In 2022, by launching the Mental Timeout initiative, Tennis Canada committed to taking concrete steps in improving the well-being of tennis players at the National Bank Open while promoting a safe and inclusive environment," added Valérie Tétreault, Tournament Director of the National Bank Open in Montreal. "Though we recognize that there is still much progress to be made, we have been successful in generating discussions about the importance of mental health in sports, thereby contributing to the effort to end the current stigma. We will keep on working towards this goal and seek new ways to support athletes, so that we can continue to do our part and act as a leader in this space."

An important element of Mental Timeout is the [Positive Court Pledge](#), a written promise signed by those involved in Canadian tennis that aims to create a supportive, safe and thriving environment. Mental Timeout also includes the hugely popular Positivity Postcards, uplifting handwritten messages that are hand-delivered to player locker rooms during the tournament.

This year, Tennis Canada has stepped up its commitment to player mental health by introducing a wellness passport, called "**Mental Health Matters**" which lists all the services and resources on offer for players on and off site, and can fit inside the player credential for easy reference.

"I am so proud to be an ambassador for the Mental Timeout program and to see it continuously evolve and offer new opportunities for players to feel supported here in Canada," said Andreescu. "Pulling together all that we offer into one place with **Mental Health Matters** will be a great resource for players and demonstrates that the National Bank Open is treating player wellness as a top priority."

Fans can expect bigger and better activations on site in both [Toronto](#) and [Montreal](#), with the Mental Timeout zones expanded to include a giant colouring wall and a journaling station. They will also be able to get up close to WTA and ATP players during yoga and dog therapy sessions during the qualifying weekend.

About the National Bank Open presented by Rogers

The National Bank Open presented by Rogers is a Tennis Canada owned and operated world-class tournament celebrating over 130 years of the women's event from August 4-12 at Sobey's Stadium in Toronto and over 140 years of the men's event from August 3-12 at IGA Stadium in Montreal. As a Hologic WTA 1000 and ATP Tour Masters 1000 tournament, the National Bank Open presented by Rogers will showcase the world's best players. The National Bank Open presented by Rogers is the third-oldest title in tennis, behind only Wimbledon and the US Open. For more information and tickets visit www.nationalbankopen.com.

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AUGUST
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