

SPORTS

All eyes on Wimbledon post-COVID-19 improvements

June 25, 2021



The clubhouse view at Wimbledon. Image credit: Wimbledon

By KATIE TAMOLA

After COVID-19 forced a historic cancellation of the Wimbledon tennis tournament last year, some of tennis' biggest stars are ready to return to the historic sporting event.

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Event organizers are taking to social media to fuel excitement and support the event, as fans vie to buy tickets. With Wimbledon being one of the first major sporting events after COVID-19 vaccination rollouts and lifted restrictions, many will be watching to see who is participating, if the event is widely attended and how COVID-19 is addressed.

"We are seeing renewed interest in in-person sporting events in real life," said Dr. William Lang, chief medical officer of [WorldClinic](#) and [JobSiteCare](#). "In the United States most professional sports have opened to in-person attendance, and in most locations, this is at or near full capacity, and this is especially true for outdoor sporting events such as Wimbledon, so we know the willingness to attend in-person is there.

"The biggest issue in the United Kingdom, however, is the rise in the predominance of the delta variant," he said. "This has driven a quadrupling of COVID rates over just about the last month because of the significantly increased infectivity of this variant, however, the increased infectivity is most significant only for those who are not vaccinated."

Wimbledon 2021

The Wimbledon tournament runs from June 21 July 12.

The official Instagram account has more than 4,407 posts with 2.7 million followers and features a collection of photos, short videos and throwback posts to previous years' tournaments.

Wimbledon is showcasing some of its biggest contenders, including U.S. tennis star Serena Williams, who has won seven Wimbledon titles.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Wimbledon (@wimbledon)

According to [amNewYork](#), The 2021 Wimbledon tournament is a government-approved pilot event' with a minimum 50 percent capacity rising to a full 15,000 attendance for the men's and women's singles finals on Centre Court.

Ticket holders must still show proof of vaccination, a negative COVID-19 test, or evidence of full recovery from the virus, and wear face masks when not seated.

According to ESPN, defending Wimbledon men's tennis champion Novak Djokovic has been named top seed, meaning he has received the highest ranking for this tournament, as he is seeking his 20th Grand Slam title. Roger Federer is seeded seventh.

Ms. Williams is seeded seventh for the women's competition, with Australian tennis player Ashleigh Barty seeded first. Defending champion Simona Halep is seeded second.

Some of the sport's biggest names have made headlines for choosing not to compete in the tournament.

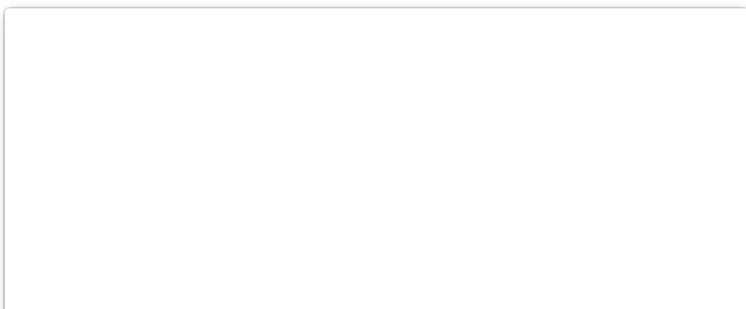
Naomi Osaka, who is the second-ranked women's tennis player in the world, has elected not to compete in Wimbledon. Ms. Osaka has noted that she is taking time to focus on her mental health and spending time with her family.

Her decision was met with immediate criticism from onlookers, although notable figures have come to her defense and offered their support.

American actress Taraji P. Henson, who recently participated in Hearst's Town & Country magazine's Philanthropy Summit, has openly supported Osaka.

"She's taking care of herself, why is that an issue?" Ms. Henson said, in an interview with another publication earlier this week. "That's not fair, nor is it healthy, nor is it right."

Ms. Henson spoke at the Philanthropy Summit with Congressman Jamie Raskin about the work to erase the stigma surrounding mental health conversations and programs ([see story](#)).



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A post shared by Wimbledon (@wimbledon)

Raphael Nadal, the third-ranked men's tennis player in the world, will also not be participating in Wimbledon, citing health concerns.

Ms. Osaka will be competing at the Tokyo Olympics, while Mr. Nadal will not.

"Both Ms. Osaka and Mr. Nadal, as well as the other major athletes who are choosing not to participate in the tournament, have cited very reasonable personal physical or timing reasons that the tournament does not make sense for them," Dr. Lang said. "Ensuring people are aware that these athletes do not have COVID-related reasons for passing on the event may not decrease their disappointment with missing out on the stars, but it will very much help to show that it's not COVID that is the root cause."

Where luxury meets Wimbledon

The luxury industry has long been connected with one of the biggest tournaments in tennis.

Ms. Williams, one of the biggest pulls of the event due to her immense success and star-power, has served as a global ambassador for U.S. footwear label Stuart Weitzman since last year ([see story](#)). Since then, she has starred in various campaigns focusing on positivity and self-confidence ([see story](#)).

British automaker Jaguar Land Rover has served as the official car partner to Wimbledon since 2015, supplying a fleet of more than 17 vehicles for event operations during the tournament.

In 2017, Jaguar took a slightly more unique approach in advertising for Wimbledon, combining the classical charms of tennis with the latest virtual reality technology. Jaguar's campaign gave users the ability to step inside the shoes of tennis star Andy Murray and experience a game from his perspective in virtual reality ([see story](#)).

With COVID-19 restrictions being lifted and vaccines becoming available, luxury lovers, tennis fans and those who are just looking to celebrate the outdoors are some of the many groups showing interest in this year's tournament.

"As with so many things regarding this pandemic, education and communication are the key," Dr. Lang said.

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