

Tennis stars to shine in Kingdom

Former US Open champion Marin Cilic headlines impressive field in Bahrain Ministry of Interior Tennis Challenger

● **ATP Challenger Tour event set to take place from Sunday**

● **Matches set for Public Security Officers Club in Gudaibiya**

● **Total US\$164,000 on offer in prize money for ATP players**

TDT | Manama

Eight world-ranked star players will be taking part in the tournament, including Christopher O'Connell of Australia, Arthur Cazaux and Richard Gasquet of France, Fabio Fognini of Italy, Vit Kopriva and Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic, Filip Misolic of Austria, and Abdullah Shelbayh of Jordan

Former US Open champion Marin Cilic of Croatia is set to headline a star-studded field of competitors in the Bahrain Ministry of Interior Tennis Challenger 2024, scheduled to get underway next week. The tournament's organising committee has announced a final list of 130 players who will participate in the tournament, which is a part of the ATP Challenger Tour, under the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP).

The ATP Challenger Tour is the second-highest tier of tennis competition, behind only the ATP Tour. The Kingdom's event, which offers US\$164,000 in prize money, has attracted a host of prominent tennis players, most notably eight world-ranked stars. Cilic, considered one of the greatest Croatian tennis players in history, is another top name, who had achieved a career-high singles ranking of world number three in 2018.

The 2014 US Open winner, who was also an Australian Open and Wimbledon finalist, expressed his excitement in competing in the Kingdom. "I'm really looking forward to my first visit to Bahrain and connecting with tennis fans there," Cilic, who is an Olympic silver-medallist, was quoted as saying. "This tournament will be an excellent challenge to showcase my game and the work I have been putting in since my injury last year."

Return
Australian Christopher O'Connell, currently ranked 64th in



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MARIN CILIC

the world, will also participate. He will be playing in Bahrain for the third time. Furthermore, the tournament will witness the participation of French player Arthur Cazaux, who has a current world ranking of 80th—the best of his career so far. Others in the field are Cazaux's countryman Richard Gasquet, globally ranked at 131; Italian Fabio Fognini, world 103;



Fabio Fognini...Italian star



Christopher O'Connell...returning talent

and Czech player Vit Kopriva, currently 116th in the world. World number 130 Jakub Mensik will also participate, as will Austrian Filip Misolic and Jordanian player Abdullah Shelbayh, who are both amongst the world's top 200. Shelbayh was the 2023 runner-up in Bahrain. The tournament will be organised from Sunday to February 17 by the Public Security Sports Association at the Public Security Officers Club in Gudaibiya. In last year's tournament, Thanasi Kokkinakis of Australia,

then ranked 141st in the world, was crowned singles champion after defeating Shelbayh 6-1, 6-4 in the final. Kokkinakis joined India's Ramkumar Ramanathan as the tournament's singles title winners in the competition's two editions. The doubles champions were Patrik Niklas-Salminen of Finland and Bart Stevens of the Netherlands in 2023, and the Portuguese duo of Nuno Borges and Francisco Cabral in 2022.

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