



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ELISE MERTENS, MONICA PUIG, AND HOMETOWN PLAYER ANDRE ILAGAN COMMIT TO PLAY IN THE HAWAII OPEN TENNIS TOURNAMENT**

New additions join the star-studded roster at the Blaisdell Arena, Dec. 21-23

HONOLULU (December 12, 2018) — Elise Mertens, ranked No.12 on the WTA Tour, and 2016 Olympic Gold Medalist Monica Puig have committed to play in the 2018 Hawaii Open Tennis Tournament, presented by the Hawaii Tourism Authority. They join a competitive lineup that includes U.S. Open semifinalist and ATP World Tour No. 9 Kei Nishikori, ATP World Tour No. 18 Milos Raonic, two-time Grand Slam champion and WTA Tour No. 18 Garbiñe Muguruza, and former Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard.

The Hawaii Open will be held Dec. 21-23, 2018, at the Blaisdell Arena in Honolulu, Hawaii. This will be the first time the tournament is held at this venue, located downtown in the state's beautiful capital.

Elise Mertens has risen through the rankings with her impressive performance this season, winning three titles this year, which pushed her to a career-high ranking of No. 12. The 23-year-old Belgian made it to the semifinals of the Australian Open this year. This will be Mertens first time visiting Hawaii.

“I have never been to Hawaii, but it has always been a dream to visit the islands,” Mertens said. “I am especially looking forward to experiencing the Polynesian way of life and beautiful scenery and nature. I especially love animals, so I am very curious to learn which kind of animals live on the island.”

Reigning Olympic Gold Medalist Monica Puig has also joined the lineup at the Hawaii Open. She was the first athlete representing Puerto Rico to win a Gold Medal. Puig says she looks forward to the Hawaii Open as she prepares for the 2019 season.

“I think the event will be a perfect way for me to put the finishing touches on my pre-season and be ready for a successful 2019,” she said. “I have worked very hard with my team this off-season in Florida, and now to be in Hawaii on the way to Auckland and then Australia, it works great to get some matches in and be ready for the start of the new year.”

Hometown player and current University of Hawai'i student Andre Ilagan will receive a Wild Card and is the 6th player in the Men's Draw. Ilagan is a two-time boys singles champion of the HMSA/HHSAA Tennis State Championships. He graduated from Farrington High School and currently plays tennis for the Rainbow Warriors.

Three rounds of exhilarating single-elimination matches will be played over three days in a best two-out-of-three set format. Third sets will be played as a tie break with the first to 10 points declared the winner.

Daily tournament ticket prices begin at \$25 and three-day passes begin at \$70. Tickets can be purchased at [www.hawaiitennisopen.com](http://www.hawaiitennisopen.com) and [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).

The Hawaii Open will include a special charity session Saturday evening at 6 p.m. after tournament match play. Proceeds will benefit the Hawai'i Island Volcano Recovery Fund at the Hawai'i Community Foundation and Room to Read. The session will include match play with Hawaii Open tennis players and special guests, actor Daniel Dae Kim and Hawaii Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard. Tickets to the special charity session are \$20.

For more information, visit [www.hawaiitennisopen.com](http://www.hawaiitennisopen.com). Follow Hawaii Open on [facebook.com/hawaiitennisopen](https://www.facebook.com/hawaiitennisopen), on Twitter [@hitennisopen](https://twitter.com/hitennisopen), and on Instagram at [@hawaiioopen](https://www.instagram.com/hawaiioopen).

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Contact: Molly Flores, 202.449.4152  
[mflores@linksp.com](mailto:mflores@linksp.com)