

## **EXCEPTIONAL DEPTH LEAVES 2010 HEINEKEN OPEN WIDE OPEN**

Media Release

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The Heineken Open featuring the Panasonic Singles and Doubles has confirmed a top quality field for the 2010 tournament.

The eight seeds are ranked in the top 31 in the world, easily the best in the history of the Heineken Open. There are also 11 players inside the top 40 giving the tournament depth it has never had before. The direct entry cut off is 59.

Former world No3 and 2002 Wimbledon finalist David Nalbandian will require a wildcard into the main draw as he has a ranking of 65. However this will make him a dangerous floater in the draw and seeded players will be wary of him.

The Heineken Open is known as a launching pad for players to go on to Grand Slam and ranking success. Some of these players include Rafael Nadal, Juan Martin Del Potro and Andy Murray.

In the 2010 tournament players who may fall into this category could be American John Isner who was one of the stars of January's tournament coming through qualifying and playing multiple three set contests.

He was eventually stopped in the quarterfinals. Isner is at a current career high singles ranking of 34 after starting the year at 143 while playing qualifying in Auckland.

Isner went on to knock out Andy Roddick from the US Open and reach the fourth round playing on centre court in New York.

Frenchman Jeremy Chardy is one off his career high ranking sitting at 32 in the rankings but is one of the rising stars of the tennis tour. He is rated highly by his peers and had a good year by making the final at Johannesburg and winning the title at Stuttgart.

Twenty-one-year-old Thomaz Bellucci of Brazil is also at a high ranking of 36 after starting the year at 86 in the world. He was a finalist at Costa Do Sauipe where he was beaten by Tommy Robredo in the final. At Gstaad he won through qualifying to eventually take the title winning seven matches in succession.

Argentine Horacio Zeballos rose 143 places from the beginning of 2009 to reach a high of 41. He currently sits at 45 in the rankings and is the ATP's Challenger title leader for the year having won five titles out of eight Challenger finals. He also made the final of the ATP St Petersburg Open.

Of note is that the top four seeds for the tournament are all Spaniards with Robredo ranked at 16, David Ferrer at 18, former world No1 and 2003 Roland Garros champion Juan Carlos Ferrero at 23 and Nicolas Almagro at 26. Between them they have a total of 33 ATP Tour singles titles.

The remaining four seeds are 2008 champion Philipp Kohlschreiber at 27, Austria's Jurgen Melzer who is a newcomer to Auckland at 28, regular visitor Juan Monaco at 30, and Spain's Albert Montanes ranked 31<sup>st</sup> in the world.

"This is a field with outstanding depth. We are going to be entertained by a class field where there is no obvious winner and the tantalizing prospect of a significant number of quality, hard fought, unpredictable matches," says Heineken Open Tournament Director, Richard Palmer.

The Heineken Open featuring the Panasonic Singles and Doubles will be held at the ASB Tennis Centre, January 11-16, 2010 with the first two days of qualifying, January 9-10 at the Albany Tennis Park, Oteha Valley Road, Albany.