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# BILLIE JEAN KING *Cup*

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Tennis Australia acknowledges the Jagera and Turrbal people as the Traditional Custodians of Meenjin (Brisbane), the lands on which we work, rest and play on. We pay our respects to Jagera and Turrbal Elders past, present and emerging.



# INTERNATIONAL TENNIS FEDERATION

► It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge Qualifiers Group D in Brisbane. We are looking forward to three days of great tennis here, with Australia, Kazakhstan and Colombia all competing for a place at this year's Finals.

The 2025 Qualifiers are being played as six groups of three nations as the Billie Jean King Cup Finals transition from a 12-team event in 2024 to an eight-team event in 2025, mirroring the existing Davis Cup Final 8 format.

The Billie Jean King Cup, the women's World Cup of Tennis, celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2023. Over the last six decades, it has grown to become the largest international team competition in women's sport, with a record 146 nations entered this year.

Formerly known as the Fed Cup, this historic competition was renamed in honour of Billie Jean King in 2020 – a fitting tribute to an individual who, in addition to being one of the game's all-time greats, has been a champion for equality and fought discrimination in all its forms throughout her life. It is the first time a major global team competition has been named after a woman, representing a landmark moment for sport.

The Billie Jean King Cup creates a unique atmosphere, unlike any other event that the players experience on tour, and we are confident that the competition will be even bigger and better this season.

The prize for victory this week is a place in the 2025 Finals in Shenzhen, China, P.R. – and the chance to compete to be crowned world champions. The teams that win their groups at this week's Billie Jean King

Cup Qualifiers will join 2024 winners Italy and hosts China, P.R. at the 2025 Billie Jean King Cup Finals.

Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge is about more than the Finals and the Qualifiers. It is also the story of the 146 nations taking part across six continents in this global tournament that spans three further levels of competition. In every match, players take pride in playing for something bigger than themselves, representing their country with the dream of their nation progressing from regional level on to the Qualifiers. The Billie Jean King Cup is a vital tool for developing our sport in all these countries and delivering tennis for future generations.

I would like to pay tribute to all Billie Jean King Cup sponsors and partners, including title sponsor Gainbridge, with whom we began a six-year partnership in 2022. Through the partnership, women and men were paid equivalent prize money for competing at the Billie Jean King Cup and Davis Cup Finals in 2022, 2023 and 2024. This was an important step towards achieving our ambition of closing the gender pay gap at all levels of the competition and part of the ITF's Advantage All strategy which supports gender equality throughout the sport.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Tennis Australia for their collaboration, and to acknowledge the work of everyone involved in organising this group event. Thank you also to the players and captains who give so much to making the Billie Jean King Cup such a special competition throughout the year.

Enjoy the tennis!



*David A. Haggerty*

David Haggerty  
President, ITF



# TENNIS AUSTRALIA

► Welcome to the Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers where Australia will face Kazakhstan and Colombia.

The Queensland Tennis Centre will once again host the home tie, offering Australian fans another exciting opportunity to watch world-class athletes compete on home soil for the second consecutive year.

Leading the Culture Amp Australian Billie Jean King Cup team is top-70 star Kimberly Birrell, who is thrilled to represent her home state of Queensland.

Sam Stosur will return as Australian captain for her second year. As the nation's most successful Billie Jean King Cup singles player, her

invaluable experience and leadership will guide the next generation of female athletes.

Tennis Australia is dedicated to fostering leadership opportunities for women and girls, both on and off the court, and we're proud to continue that work through events like this.

These events wouldn't be possible without the incredible team behind the scenes – from Event Operations to our ballkids, volunteers and officials – and we extend our thanks to each of them for their unwavering commitment and hard work.

We wish all teams the best of luck in this tie and thank our passionate fans for their unmatched support.



*Jayne Hrdlicka*

Jayne Hrdlicka  
Chair, Tennis Australia



# AUSTRALIA RISING

Australian women's tennis is having a moment, with a string of players on the rise including a growing cohort inside the top 100 - presenting a healthy selection challenge for Billie Jean King Cup captain Sam Stosur. By MATT TROLLOPE.

In December, when the Australian Open 2025 entry lists were released, just one local woman earned direct entry into the main draw. That was Olivia Gadecki, then the top-ranked Australian woman at world No.96.

A few months on, Gadecki's ranking has barely changed. Yet she now finds herself as the Aussie No.4 after a flurry of great tour results for the nation's women. Kimberly Birrell, Maya Joint and Ajla Tomljanovic have since entered the bracket, giving Australia the most WTA top-100 players at the same time since October 2019.

This presented a selection conundrum for Australian captain Sam Stosur - but a good problem to have - as she prepares to guide Australia into battle against Kazakhstan and Colombia at Pat Rafter Arena on 10-12 April. The three-team tie, part of a revamped competition structure for 2025, will see the best-performed nation advance to November's Billie Jean King Cup Finals in November.

Thanks to the depth of the Australian squad, Stosur fancies their chances.

"It's not like any time it's necessarily easy to pick [the team] because you've got to still think about everything as a whole, but this time around it certainly wasn't easy," said Stosur, who ultimately selected Birrell, Joint, Tomljanovic, Ellen Perez and Storm Hunter for the April ties.

"I guess you have to stay objective and sometimes make tough calls. It's always difficult because we do have a group of players that are always available and want to play. Knowing they really care about representing Australia in Billie Jean King Cup does make it hard because you know it means so much to them to be selected.

"But you go with your decisions and hopefully this team that we've got can get it done and make it through to the Finals.

"I think Kazakhstan, with Elena Rybakina and Yulia Putintseva, are the No.1 side ranking-wise with their players, and then Camila Osorio [for Colombia] is a world-class player, so it's not going

**'I THINK ONE OF OUR STRENGTHS IS THAT WE DO COMBINE SO WELL AS A TEAM AND WE GET BEHIND EACH OTHER AND WE BACK EACH OTHER.'**

SAM STOSUR

to be easy.

"But I think one of our strengths is that we do combine so well as a team and we get behind each other and we back each other, whether it's Billie Jean Cup weeks or whatever other week on tour - the girls all support each other so it becomes a real natural thing for them to do for Billie Jean King Cup... rankings can kind of be thrown out the window in these team competitions.

"I do believe we can do it. We've a great group and we'll give it everything we've got to try and qualify. We know we're going to have the home crowd support, which is awesome, and that can also count for a lot."

Last year, the story was all about Australia's men thriving on the world stage. Midway through 2024, there were 10 of them inside the ATP top 100 - the most since 1982 - and nine remain there now. Yet there were times throughout 2024, such as immediately after the US Open, when there were no Australian women inside the WTA top 100.

**ON THE RISE:**  
During 2025 Kimberly Birrell has risen from outside the top 100 to a career-high singles ranking of world No.62.



## TEAM AUSTRALIA

**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Ellen Perez (L) and Storm Hunter celebrate clinching the doubles tie in Australia's 2-1 win over Kazakhstan at the 2023 Finals; Australia's Billie Jean Cup captain Sam Stosur (R) and coach Nicole Pratt (L) will guide the team together for the second straight year in Brisbane; 18-year-old Maya Joint will make her Billie Jean King Cup debut for Australia as a top-100 singles player.

Gadecki was the first to change that, powering into the WTA singles final in Guadalajara in September and boosting her ranking from outside the top 150 to world No.88 – an improvement that helped her directly enter the AO 2025 main draw and set a marker for her countrywomen to chase.

On the eve of AO 2025, Australia's Billie Jean King Cup team coach Nicole Pratt almost perfectly forecasted what might unfold from there.

"I think there's a whole bunch of them that are just outside top 100. And from Sam [Stosur's] and my perspective, we've just been looking for someone to really break through," Pratt said.

"And I think that breakthrough is going to come from a Maya Joint. We saw in week one [of the season], Kim Birrell, having a breakthrough, beating [top-10 player] Emma Navarro. Like, that's huge. Got her back inside top 100 at 99. Just qualified [for the AO]."

Birrell was a breakout player of the Australian summer, reaching the quarterfinals of the Brisbane International – and coming within a point of the semifinals – then winning three rounds of AO

qualifying to reach the main draw. Next came a quarterfinal run at the WTA event in Singapore then an Australian Pro Tour title in Brisbane, results which saw her become the No.1 Aussie women and rise to a then career-high ranking of world No.75.

By the time she was confirmed as the first player in Australia's Billie Jean King Cup squad for Brisbane, she had already won 13 of her first 16 matches of 2025.

"It is incredible to wear the green and gold. It's what I dreamt of doing as a kid, watching and wanting to be a professional tennis player," said Birrell, who rose to 62nd following the 'Sunshine Double' of Indian Wells and Miami.

"In Australia, we have such a rich history of the Billie Jean King Cup and Davis Cup, so to be a part of that now ... is incredibly special.

"I feel so at home here on this court [in Brisbane], I've had so many special memories, watching and playing in the Brisbane International and training here a lot of the year. To get to play a home tie so close

**BELOW:** Ajla Tomljanovic, a team stalwart who has represented Australia since 2019, brings the experience of three Grand Slam quarterfinals to the Aussie squad.

to where I grew up is absolutely amazing."

Pratt was right in her predictions for Joint. The teenager had already made incredible strides in 2024, winning more than 60 matches and slashing her ranking from 684th to the cusp of the top 100. And she continued that momentum into 2025, outplaying Olga Danilovic, Magda Linette and Sofia Kenin en route to the Hobart International semifinals – her best tour-level result.

She went to another level in Merida, Mexico, routing Donna Vekic for her first top-20 win and soaring inside the top 100 after reaching the quarterfinals at the 500-level event.

"Obviously doing what she's done in the last 12-18 months is phenomenal," said Stosur of Joint, who was selected as the Australian team's 'Orange Girl' for the 2024 finals in Malaga.

"Her improvement is fantastic. She seems to really just love playing, love competing. She'll grit and scrap sometimes, she'll play aggressive, she'll slide into balls. You can tell that she really wants it and wants to be better and keep improving.



**'I DO BELIEVE SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS, AND ONCE YOU SEE A COUPLE OF THEM DOING IT, THEN [THE OTHERS THINK] 'HEY, I WANT TO BE PART OF THAT.'**

**SAM STOSUR**

"I know she's excited [to be selected]; she was pumped when I called her to ask her to come."

The same week Joint flourished in Merida, Tomljanovic advanced to the semifinals of the WTA event in Austin, ensuring her top-100 return. It was that same tournament where Hunter, after almost a year on the sidelines following an Achilles rupture, made a popular tour return on the doubles court.

Beyond those four Aussies in the singles top 100 – and subsequently a fifth, after world No.12 Daria Kasatkina's recent decision to represent Australia – there were another five ranked in the top 150 through the end of March.

In doubles, Perez maintains a top-20 world ranking, starting

2025 strongly with a WTA title in Abu Dhabi (with Jelena Ostapenko) as well as 1000-level quarterfinals in Doha and Indian Wells.

Not only do these results bode well for April in Brisbane; Stosur believes they have positive ramifications for well beyond that.

"Now to have four [singles players] that look like a good chance for direct entry into the French [Open] is fantastic," Stosur said.

"I do believe success breeds success, and once you see a couple of them doing it, then [the others think] 'hey, I want to be part of that.' We all say it but I truly believe it does mean something.

"So yeah, it's going really well, but we've got to keep going for more."

# AUSTRALIAN TEAM



**KIMBERLY BIRRELL**

**SINGLES RANK** 62

**DOUBLES RANK** 196

**W-L RECORD** 1-3 (0-3 in singles)  
Birrell's incredible 2025 success has seen her peak at world No.62 after years of injury setbacks. As a result she will lead the team at Pat Rafter Arena, where she reached this year's Brisbane International quarterfinals.



**MAYA JOINT**

**SINGLES RANK** 81

**DOUBLES RANK** 156

**W-L RECORD** 0-0

At the beginning of 2024 Joint was ranked 684th; now she is one of just two top-100 ranked teenagers. This improvement, plus a sizzling start to 2025, prompted her selection in what will be her competition debut in Brisbane.



**AJLA TOMLJANOVIC**

**SINGLES RANK** 87

**DOUBLES RANK** 1170

**W-L RECORD** 4-5 (all singles)  
The three-time Slam quarterfinalist is restoring her ranking after a frustrating run with injury. She reached round two at the AO, made the Austin semifinals, qualified for Indian Wells and made a winning start in Charleston.



**ELLEN PEREZ**

**SINGLES RANK** -

**DOUBLES RANK** 19

**W-L RECORD** 1-3 (all doubles)  
Since 2022 Perez has established herself as one of the world's best practitioners of the tandem game. The Aussie lefty has claimed eight career WTA doubles titles – most recently at Abu Dhabi in February in an impressive start to 2025.



**STORM HUNTER**

**SINGLES RANK** -

**DOUBLES RANK** 334

**W-L RECORD** 10-4 (6-2 in singles)  
Returning after a near year-long absence due to an Achilles rupture, Hunter was soaring before that, ending 2023 as year-end doubles world No.1, nearing the singles top 100 and building an impressive Billie Jean King Cup record.



An opportunity 22 years in the making awaits Colombia in Brisbane as the South American nation seeks to enter the top tier of the Billie Jean King Cup competition for the first time since 2003. By JACKSON MANSELL.

**T**he last 22 years have been difficult for the Colombian Billie Jean King Cup team. However, a successful weekend in Brisbane on 10-12 April could be the perfect good-news story for the resurgent tennis force. Not since 2003 has the South American nation featured in the elite World Group and fought for international tennis supremacy. That year, after being on the receiving end of a 5-0 demolition to France in the first round of the World Group, Colombia was demoted to the Americas Zone and remained there until this year. Between 2004 and 2022, when promotional Play-off ties were in effect, Colombia held a 1-4 record, which included three consecutive defeats from 2010 to 2012. Their only win preceded

another 5-0 whitewash in the 2008 World Group II Play-offs, this time against Belgium. Colombia eventually overcame its Play-off stage hoodoo in 2024 by producing an inspired performance - poetically, with a 3-2 win over France on home soil last November - to book its ticket to Brisbane for the 2025 Qualifiers Round. The result also relegated France to the regional zones for the first time in 13 years. Team Colombia's presence in Brisbane will represent their biggest opportunity to reach the Billie Jean King Cup Finals - the current-day equivalent of the World Group, after format changes - since that 2003 campaign. Australia and Kazakhstan, both higher-ranked nations, stand in the way of a return to

**LEADING LIGHT:** Camila Osorio, who's been as high as world No.33, boasts an impressive 13-4 singles record in Billie Jean King Cup play.



the top flight. Yet Colombia has the firepower required to be a genuine threat. Camila Osorio, 23, leads this outfit, something she has seemed destined to do since her Billie Jean King Cup debut in 2016 at just 14 years of age. The youngest debutant in Colombian history has won eight of her first 10 singles matches in the international format, all of which came before her 18th birthday. "It was incredible. I remember it very well. I was very young and very happy to be there," Osorio said about her competition debut. "I love playing for Colombia. Every single tie is special. I hope we can play the Finals one day." Osorio's 17-8 record in Billie Jean King Cup rubbers (13-4 in singles competition) has been pivotal in Colombia's ascendancy. She was the catalyst in their 2024 Play-off win against France, where she prevailed against top-100 opponents Varvara Gracheva and Clara Burel. Osorio approaches the qualifying stage of the 2025 competition in sizzling form. Earlier this season she upset world No.30 Maria Sakkari in the opening round at the Australian



**DREAM TEAM:** Colombia's top two singles players Osorio (R) and Arango (L) are both inside the top 100.

**'I LOVE PLAYING FOR COLOMBIA. EVERY SINGLE TIE IS SPECIAL. I HOPE WE CAN PLAY THE FINALS ONE DAY.'**  
CAMILA OSORIO

Open, her biggest victory at a major tournament. She then reached the quarterfinals in Singapore, before defeating four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka at Indian Wells. Despite Osorio's feats this

season, there is no Colombian in hotter form than Emiliana Arango. The 24-year-old has ascended the WTA rankings thanks to a scintillating month in Mexico, during which she claimed her first

singles title since October 2021 in Cancun, dropping just one set during the WTA 125 tournament. Yet it was her performance in Merida that resulted in the biggest rise; Arango climbed 53 places to world No.80 after her first finals appearance at a WTA 500 tournament, making her top-100 debut. Given her form, Arango will likely assume the role of Colombia's second singles player once again. Rounding out the Colombian team are experienced campaigners Yuliana Lizarazo and Paulina Perez, who were emphatic in ensuring their return to the Billie Jean King Cup Play-offs in 2024. While their singles performances were equally as impressive in Americas Zone Group I last April, it was their performances collectively that proved vital - Lizarazo and Perez won four of their five doubles encounters to set up that showdown with France. Their experience in cutthroat Billie Jean King Cup ties could be called upon as Colombia attempts to end its long-running absence from the top tier of the competition in Brisbane.

## COLOMBIAN TEAM.



**CAMILA OSORIO**  
**SINGLES RANK** 54  
**DOUBLES RANK** 186  
**W-L RECORD** 17-8  
The 23-year-old was Colombia's youngest-ever Billie Jean King Cup debutant, playing her first tie in 2016 at 14 years of age. Her singles game has been a real focal point in Colombia's rise; Osorio has won 13 of her 17 rubbers.



**EMILIANA ARANGO**  
**SINGLES RANK** 84  
**DOUBLES RANK** 636  
**W-L RECORD** 12-10  
Arango has excelled for Colombia of late. The 24-year-old has won five of her last seven Billie Jean King Cup rubbers for the yellow, blue and red.



**YULIANA LIZARAZO**  
**SINGLES RANK** 688  
**DOUBLES RANK** 417  
**W-L RECORD** 22-15  
The most experienced member of this squad, the 31-year-old greatly influenced Colombia's group stage triumph last April. She went 8-1 across the week to help book their date with France.



**PAULINA PEREZ**  
**SINGLES RANK** 1056  
**DOUBLES RANK** 240  
**W-L RECORD** 13-15  
Making her representative debut in 2015, Perez has been a mainstay on the doubles court for Colombia. Of her 28 rubbers, 20 have been played in the pairs format.

# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Elena Rybakina, whose 2022 Wimbledon triumph sparked a tennis boom in Kazakhstan, will lead her nation into battle for the Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers in Brisbane. By DAN IMHOFF

In Kazakhstan, tennis historically rates barely a mention behind soccer, ice hockey, wrestling or boxing.

So it was a big deal when Gennady Golovkin, a Kazakhstani national hero, was among those who lavished Elena Rybakina in glory following her career-defining Wimbledon triumph in 2022.

Once considered the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world and a silver medallist at the Athens 2004 Olympics, Golovkin saluted his nation's newest champion on social

media, a message signed off with "Alga Kazakhstan" ("Forward, Kazakhstan").

While Rybakina's breakthrough boosted tennis' popularity in the country she has called home since 18, the country's decision to invest heavily in the sport began some 16 years earlier.

Prominent businessman Bulat Utemuratov was chosen in 2007 to head the Kazakhstan Tennis Federation and was among

those in Rybakina's Centre Court entourage as she denied Ons Jabeur for the Wimbledon trophy.

"Our best sports person was Golovkin, the boxer, but now everybody talks only about Elena Rybakina," Utemuratov told *The Guardian*. "She's the new icon and this is a different situation. We're happy that she encourages a new generation of kids to come and play tennis."

Kazakhstan's best results in the Billie Jean King Cup - formerly Fed Cup - since it first competed as a nation in 1995 have been back-to-back Finals appearances

in 2022 and 2023. Last year, in Rybakina's absence, the team fell to a Naomi Osaka-led Japan in April's Qualifiers.

Back at full strength, the team hopes to return to the Finals for the third time in four years should they outperform Australia and Colombia at the Qualifiers in Brisbane in 2025.

Rybakina's ascent to become a top-10 fixture has underpinned her nation's rise in team successes - Kazakhstan also reached the United Cup semifinals in January - and she relishes playing on the blue hard courts Down Under, especially at Pat Rafter Arena.

She overwhelmed top seed Aryna Sabalenka to lift the 2024 Brisbane International trophy, following a runner-up showing at Australian Open 2023 when she came agonisingly close to adding a second major to her haul against Sabalenka.

During an injury and illness-marred back half of 2024, Rybakina, now 25, took advantage of the downtime to sit her driving test, spurred on after she was unable to drive the new Porsche she won with the Stuttgart title last April.

"In tennis, of course I want just to stay healthy because last year I skipped a lot of tournaments," Rybakina said. "I was not able to participate in big events. For me to play from beginning until the end of the year, [and] of course, I want to win big titles - this is my goal on court."

For more than a decade, Yulia Putintseva has been at the forefront of the Kazakhstan team and has built a commanding 20-11 record in singles.

A stark contrast to the 1.84m-tall Rybakina, a powerful ball-striker with unflappable on-court resolve, the 1.63m Putintseva is an unapologetic straight-shooter, a tenacious competitor who thrives on keeping her opponent guessing, and a proponent of the drop shot, slice and all-round variety.

A three-time major quarterfinalist - twice at Roland Garros and once at the US Open - Putintseva last year hit a hot streak on grass where unseeded, she denied Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic for her maiden title on the surface in Birmingham. She then snapped Iga Swiatek's 21-match winning streak to reach the fourth round at Wimbledon.

"I mean, team Kazakhstan, they're always trying to organise something... I think what they do for us, it's very, very huge," Putintseva said. "The support is, I mean, very big in terms of conditions, how they build the courts in Astana."

"They're building up more and more because of Elena, hopefully because of me, but not so much. We have a great, great base there."

Following a third-round showing on her most recent trip to Brisbane in January, she headed to Adelaide where she defeated Olympic silver medallist Donna Vekic, former world No.2 Ons Jabeur and sixth seed Diana Shnaider to reach the semifinals.

She departed Australia with a top-20 ranking for the first time, which came after a season during which she defeated Madison Keys, Zheng Qinwen and Coco Gauff - three of her 37 career top-20 wins.

Doubles world No.16 Anna Danilina - a winner of nine titles, the Australian Open 2022 women's doubles finalist and US Open 2023 mixed doubles champion - strengthens the Kazakhstani line-up in Brisbane.

The nation's longest-serving team member, former singles world No.31 Zarina Diyas, and doubles world No.163 Zhibek Kulambayeva, round out the squad.

"I'm glad that I inspired some people in Kazakhstan, I'm very happy with that," Putintseva said after her upset of then-world No.1 Swiatek at the All England Club, before hailing the flow-on effect of Rybakina's success.

"We have a good team right now. Elena is playing very, very well. I'm trying to follow and just trying to do my best every day."

**SLAM CHAMP:** Former world No.3 Rybakina has built a 7-2 singles record when representing Kazakhstan in Billie Jean King Cup.

## KAZAKHSTAN TEAM



### ELENA RYBAKINA

**SINGLES RANK** 10

**DOUBLES RANK** -

**W-L RECORD** 7-2 (7-1 singles)

A Grand Slam champion at Wimbledon with a career-high mark of world No.3, the 25-year-old has an imposing seven wins from her eight BJK Cup singles matches.



### YULIA PUTINTSEVA

**SINGLES RANK** 23

**DOUBLES RANK** 75

**W-L RECORD** 23-18 (20-11 singles)

Kazakhstan's 11-year BJK Cup stalwart, the 30-year-old is her nation's most successful in singles, in which she has claimed 20 of her 31 matches.



### ZHIBEK KULAMBAYEVA

**SINGLES RANK** 312

**DOUBLES RANK** 162

**W-L RECORD** 2-2 (doubles)

The 25-year-old has split her four BJK Cup doubles clashes, which have all been decided in a match tiebreak and played alongside Danilina.



### ZARINA DIYAS

**SINGLES RANK** 327

**DOUBLES RANK** 1054

**W-L RECORD** 19-8 (15-5 singles)

The 31-year-old former Kazakhstani No.1 has scored BJK Cup singles wins across the past 14 years and made a winning doubles debut 16 years ago.



### ANNA DANILINA

**SINGLES RANK** 895

**DOUBLES RANK** 17

**W-L RECORD** 6-9 (6-6 doubles)

A doubles specialist, the 29-year-old has scored her six doubles wins for Kazakhstan alongside three different partners, including Kulambayeva.

**FLYING THE FLAG:** Team Kazakhstan celebrate their win over Poland in the 2023 Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers.

Alex de Minaur and  
Ajla Tomljanovic  
Tennis Superstars

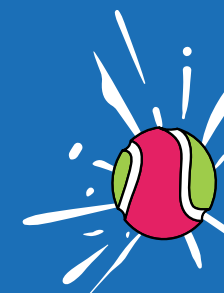


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**'I THINK IT'S REALLY SPECIAL THAT WE'RE ALL GREAT MATES OFF COURT.'**  
**KIMBERLY BIRRELL**

# Aussie SPIRIT

The foundations of Kimberly Birrell's rise to women's team No.1 have been built on the strength of her bonds with her Australian contemporaries and idols. By **MATT TROLLOPE.**

**RISEING STAR:** Australia's Kimberly Birrell has vaulted to a career-high ranking of world No.62 after a sizzling start to 2025.

**K**imberly Birrell was modest in her response when asked how it felt at the time to be Australia's top-ranked woman.

The Queenslander said it didn't actually change a lot for her, and instead gave a shout-out to many of her fellow Aussies when discussing the milestone on a recent episode of *The Sit-Down* podcast.

"It's been cool to I guess be reminded of it in a few interviews and take a minute to just appreciate where I'm at," she said, "because as a kid, if you had have said that I would be ranked the highest in Australia, I just probably wouldn't have believed it or I just would have been so amazed."

"Obviously there's been quite a few injuries within our female cohort within Australia, so I'm not comparing myself to the

other girls. And I know that Dasha [Saville] and Ajla [Tomljanovic], when they're back playing at their best, they're gonna be ranked well inside the top 100."

Since that interview, Birrell, who peaked at world No.62 after a terrific start to 2025, has been joined - as she predicted - by Tomljanovic in the top 100, as well as teenaged talent Maya Joint.

Together with Olivia Gadecki, there are now four Aussie women inside the top 100 for the first time since 2019. Saville is also knocking on the door, poised to make it five after rising to world No.105 the week of 17 March.

It's an Australian women's tennis surge that has filled Birrell with joy, and bodes well ahead of the nation's Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers tie in April against Colombia and Kazakhstan.

"I've represented Australia in

## 'IT'S SO AMAZING TO SEE STORMY BACK ON COURT, AND I'M SO PUMPED FOR HER THAT SHE'S GOING TO BE PLAYING.'

KIMBERLY BIRRELL

BJK Cup a few times now, and I just have the best time every single time, and it's such an honour to represent Australia and to wear the green and gold," she said. "So to be able to do that in April, and then to have it in Brissy, in what's basically my home town, will be absolutely amazing. I think I can speak for all of the girls that I hope we can bring some really good tennis and keep doing what we do on court and make everyone proud."

"I think it's really special that we're all great mates off court, and all the girls are such good people, and people I genuinely want to be

around all the time - it's not hard when we get to be together as a team.

"Honestly we probably wish we could do it more often because we have such a great time when we get the chance to [represent Australia together]."

A quick scan of Birrell's social media proves just how strong the bond runs between Australia's elite women players. Whether it's on the training court, in doubles, out for dinner during tournaments, on the Newcombe Medal Blue Carpet or when attending concerts or weddings, the joy when they all come

together is clear.

"As an individual sport, tennis can get pretty lonely, and particularly coming from Australia, we live pretty far away from the rest of the world and we don't get the chance to come home too often between tournaments," Birrell explained. "So I think we all sort of look for that camaraderie, not just within the BJK Cup weeks but throughout the year too."

"It really was set by example with Sam [Stosur], Casey [Dellacqua], Mol [Alicia Molik], Pratty [Nicole Pratt], and you could just tell they were all great friends, too. I really looked up to that, so it's cool that we've sort of been able to continue that."

"But it's just so easy, because everyone's so nice, and we follow each other's results and send messages, and yeah, I feel really privileged to be a part of it."

Two of those former Australian

greats - Stosur and Pratt - have been significant in Birrell's rise to a career-high position, which began in earnest in the second half of 2024 when she qualified for the US Open then reached the WTA final in Osaka.

Stosur, Australia's Billie Jean King Cup team captain, sat in her entourage as Birrell stormed to the quarterfinals in Brisbane, her first tournament of the year. Stosur later announced Birrell as her first pick for the Aussie BJK Cup squad to play at the same venue.

Stosur subsequently named team debutant Joint, plus Tomljanovic, Ellen Perez and Storm Hunter, to round out the Aussie team bound for the Queensland capital.

Birrell's spike in form has coincided with working more closely with Pratt, the national women's team coach who came on board in a more structured way after Wimbledon.

And her spirits have been buoyed further by the comeback of Hunter, another Pratt protege with whom Birrell is currently travelling.

"It's so amazing to see Stormy back on court, and I'm so pumped for her that she's going to be playing," Birrell said. "I've really missed her on tour the last 10 months, so when she said she was coming back for Austin [in February], I couldn't have been happier."

"I've just been so lucky to have Pratty in my corner, and in particular in the last 12 months, but throughout my whole career basically. She's been there, and she's such an advocate for women's tennis."

"I think we make a great team. I love being able to share these experiences with her and travel a little bit more with her, and I've just learned so much. She's such a wealth of information; I don't think

many people know more about the women's game than she does.

"So to have someone like that in your corner is pretty amazing."

After appearing on *The Sit-Down* podcast, Birrell next led a group of four Aussie women into the main draw at Indian Wells. As the top seed in qualifying, Birrell won two matches in straight sets to book her spot in the prestigious WTA 1000 field, and was joined by Tomljanovic, Joint and Maddison Inglis.

Birrell then came close to toppling 23rd seed Marta Kostyuk in the second round in Miami.

With the wind in their sails, the timing couldn't be better with national representation on the horizon.

There's a healthy competition and positive feeling among the group, and in what is already shaping as a banner season for Australia's women, we could see success breed more success.

**REUNITED:** Billie Jean King Cup teammates Kimberly Birrell (L) and Storm Hunter, who both work with Aussie team coach Nicole Pratt, are thrilled to be touring together in 2025.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The Australian team pose for photos near Brisbane's Storey Bridge ahead of last year's Qualifiers tie against Mexico; teammates Kimberly Birrell (L) and Ajla Tomljanovic at the 2023 Finals in Seville; Australian captain Sam Stosur (L) shares a laugh with Ellen Perez (centre) and Daria Saville in Brisbane.



# FRESH FORMAT FOR 2025

The Billie Jean King Cup has a new look in 2025, with a different pathway to qualification for the Finals. Here's what you need to know.

For the second year running, Australia will host the Billie Jean King Cup competition in April at Brisbane's Pat Rafter Arena. But unlike in 2024, when Australia beat Mexico in a best-of-five rubber tie to qualify for the 12-team Finals, this year Australia will be one of three teams competing at the Queensland Tennis Centre. Here's what you need to know about the revamped format in 2025.

**QUALIFIERS**  
Because the Finals have switched to an eight-team event in 2025 (down from 12 teams in 2024) the Billie Jean King "Qualifiers" stage now looks a little different.

Six groups of three nations will meet in various cities around the world during the week of 7 April, with the six group winners advancing to the Finals later this year. Brisbane is one of those six host cities, and that's where

teams from Australia, Colombia and Kazakhstan will converge to battle it out over three days at Pat Rafter Arena in Group D. Australia will play Kazakhstan on Thursday 10 April, before Kazakhstan meets Colombia the next day. On Saturday 12 April, Australia faces Colombia. Billie Jean King Cup ties have been streamlined at this stage of the competition in 2025, now comprising two singles and one doubles match in a best-of-three-rubber format.

**FINALS**  
The Finals will be staged for the first time in the Chinese city of Shenzhen, after previously being held in Glasgow (2022), Seville

**AUSTRALIA WILL PLAY KAZAKHSTAN ON THURSDAY 10 APRIL, BEFORE KAZAKHSTAN MEETS COLOMBIA THE NEXT DAY. ON SATURDAY 12 APRIL, AUSTRALIA FACES COLOMBIA.**

(2023) and Malaga (2024). Defending champions Italy, and host nation China, have already secured their spot in the eight-nation field. Wins over Colombia and Kazakhstan would see Australia top Group D and advance to the Finals for the fourth consecutive year. Australia finished runner-up to Switzerland in 2022. By Sunday 13 April, the six group winners from the Qualifiers will be determined, completing the Finals line-up.

**PLAY-OFFS**  
Meanwhile, the 12 nations who don't top their groups during the Qualifiers stage will take part in the Play-offs round in November. They'll be joined by nine countries who have progressed to the Play-offs via the Billie Jean King Cup's regional groups. All up, there will be 21 nations, divided into seven groups of three, with each group hosted by one city (much like the 2025 Qualifiers stage.) The seven group winners will advance to the 2026 Qualifiers stage, where they will meet one of the seven teams which did not win the 2025 Finals. The 2026 Qualifiers will be staged as traditional home-and-away ties; the seven winners will advance to join the host nation in Shenzhen, completing the eight-team line-up at the 2026 Finals.

# CHAMPIONS

Eleven nations have won the Billie Jean King Cup title - formerly known as Fed Cup - since USA won the first competition in 1963.

| YEAR | WINNER                    | SCORE | FINALIST       | VENUE                                                       |
|------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2024 | Italy                     | 2-0   | Slovakia       | Martin Carpena Arena, Malaga, Spain                         |
| 2023 | Canada                    | 2-0   | Italy          | Estadio de La Cartuja, Seville, Spain                       |
| 2022 | Switzerland               | 2-0   | Australia      | Emirates Arena, Glasgow, United Kingdom                     |
| 2021 | Russian Tennis Federation | 2-0   | Switzerland    | O2 Arena, Prague, Czechia                                   |
| 2020 | No competition            |       |                |                                                             |
| 2019 | France                    | 3-2   | Australia      | RAC Arena, Perth, Australia                                 |
| 2018 | Czechia                   | 3-0   | USA            | O2 Arena, Prague, Czechia                                   |
| 2017 | USA                       | 3-2   | Belarus        | Chizhovka Arena, Minsk, Belarus                             |
| 2016 | Czech Republic            | 3-2   | France         | Rhenus Sport, Strasbourg, France                            |
| 2015 | Czech Republic            | 3-2   | Russia         | O2 Arena, Prague, Czech Republic                            |
| 2014 | Czech Republic            | 3-1   | Germany        | O2 Arena, Prague, Czech Republic                            |
| 2013 | Italy                     | 4-0   | Russia         | Tennis Club Cagliari, Cagliari, Italy                       |
| 2012 | Czech Republic            | 3-1   | Serbia         | O2 Arena, Prague, Czech Republic                            |
| 2011 | Czech Republic            | 3-2   | Russia         | Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia                             |
| 2010 | Italy                     | 3-1   | USA            | San Diego Sports Arena, San Diego, CA, USA                  |
| 2009 | Italy                     | 4-0   | USA            | Circolo del Tennis "Rocco Polimeni", Reggio Calabria, Italy |
| 2008 | Russia                    | 4-0   | Spain          | Club de Campo - Villa de Madrid, Madrid, Spain              |
| 2007 | Russia                    | 4-0   | Italy          | Small Sports Arena "Luzhniki", Moscow, Russia               |
| 2006 | Italy                     | 3-2   | Belgium        | Spiroidome, Charleroi, Belgium                              |
| 2005 | Russia                    | 3-2   | France         | Roland Garros, Paris, France                                |
| 2004 | Russia                    | 3-2   | France         | Ice Stadium Krylatskoe, Moscow, Russia                      |
| 2003 | France                    | 4-1   | USA            | Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia                             |
| 2002 | Slovak Republic           | 3-1   | Spain          | Palacio de Congresos de Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, Spain     |
| 2001 | Belgium                   | 2-1   | Russia         | Parque Ferial Juan Carlos 1, Madrid, Spain                  |
| 2000 | USA                       | 5-0   | Spain          | Mandalay Bay Resort, Las Vegas, NV, USA                     |
| 1999 | USA                       | 4-1   | Russia         | Taube Tennis Stadium, Stanford, CA, USA                     |
| 1998 | Spain                     | 3-2   | Switzerland    | Palexpo Hall, Geneva, Switzerland                           |
| 1997 | France                    | 4-1   | Netherlands    | Brabant Hall, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands                 |
| 1996 | USA                       | 5-0   | Spain          | Convention Centre, Atlantic City, USA                       |
| 1995 | Spain                     | 3-2   | USA            | Valencia T.C., Valencia, Spain                              |
| 1994 | Spain                     | 3-0   | USA            | Waldstadion T.C., Frankfurt, Germany                        |
| 1993 | Spain                     | 3-0   | Australia      | Waldstadion T.C., Frankfurt, Germany                        |
| 1992 | Germany                   | 2-1   | Spain          | Waldstadion T.C., Frankfurt, Germany                        |
| 1991 | Spain                     | 2-1   | USA            | City of Nottingham T.C., Great Britain                      |
| 1990 | USA                       | 2-1   | USSR           | Peachtree W.O.T., Atlanta, GA, USA                          |
| 1989 | USA                       | 3-0   | Spain          | Ariake Forest Park Centre, Tokyo, Japan                     |
| 1988 | Czechoslovakia            | 2-1   | USSR           | Flinders Park, Melbourne, Australia                         |
| 1987 | Germany F.R.              | 2-1   | USA            | Hollyburn C.C., Vancouver, Canada                           |
| 1986 | USA                       | 3-0   | Czechoslovakia | Stvanice Stadium, Prague, Czechoslovakia                    |
| 1985 | Czechoslovakia            | 2-1   | USA            | Nagoya Green T.C., Nagoya, Japan                            |
| 1984 | Czechoslovakia            | 2-1   | Australia      | Pinheiros Sports Club, Sao Paulo, Brazil                    |
| 1983 | Czechoslovakia            | 2-1   | Germany F.R.   | Albisguetli T.C., Zurich, Switzerland                       |
| 1982 | USA                       | 3-0   | Germany F.R.   | Decathlon Club, Santa Clara, CA, USA                        |
| 1981 | USA                       | 3-0   | Great Britain  | Tamagawa-en Racquet Club, Tokyo, Japan                      |
| 1980 | USA                       | 3-0   | Australia      | Rot-Weiss T.C., Berlin, West Germany                        |
| 1979 | USA                       | 3-0   | Australia      | RSHE Club Campo, Madrid, Spain                              |
| 1978 | USA                       | 2-1   | Australia      | Kooyong Club, Melbourne, Australia                          |
| 1977 | USA                       | 2-1   | Australia      | Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, Great Britain                  |
| 1976 | USA                       | 2-1   | Australia      | Spectrum Stadium, Philadelphia, PA, USA                     |
| 1975 | Czechoslovakia            | 3-0   | Australia      | Aixoise C.C., Aix-en-Provence, France                       |
| 1974 | Australia                 | 2-1   | USA            | Naples T.C., Naples, Italy                                  |
| 1973 | Australia                 | 3-0   | South Africa   | Bad Homburg T.C., West Germany                              |
| 1972 | South Africa              | 2-1   | Great Britain  | Ellis Park, Johannesburg, South Africa                      |
| 1971 | Australia                 | 3-0   | Great Britain  | Royal King's Park T.C., Perth, Australia                    |
| 1970 | Australia                 | 3-0   | Germany F.R.   | Freiburg T.C., Freiburg, West Germany                       |
| 1969 | USA                       | 2-1   | Australia      | Athens T.C., Athens, Greece                                 |
| 1968 | Australia                 | 3-0   | Netherlands    | Stade Roland Garros, Paris, France                          |
| 1967 | USA                       | 2-0   | Great Britain  | Blau-Weiss T.C., Berlin, West Germany                       |
| 1966 | USA                       | 3-0   | Germany F.R.   | Turin Press Sporting Club, Turin, Italy                     |
| 1965 | Australia                 | 2-1   | USA            | Kooyong Club, Melbourne, Australia                          |
| 1964 | Australia                 | 2-1   | USA            | Germantown Cricket Club, Philadelphia, PA, USA              |
| 1963 | USA                       | 2-1   | Australia      | The Queen's Club, London, Great Britain                     |

# Lighting UP THE COURT

Over the years Australia's women have thrived in Billie Jean King Cup play, with several posting career highlights in the international teams competition and helping the green-and-gold to two finals in the past five editions.

Kimberly Birrell (L) and Storm Hunter in action during their doubles victory in Australia's tie versus Slovenia at the 2023 Finals in Seville, Spain.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Team Australia celebrates its 4-0 victory over Mexico at the 2024 Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers in Brisbane; Kimberly Birrell plays a backhand during the 2024 Billie Jean King Cup finals in Malaga, Spain, when Australia faced Slovakia; Ajla Tomljanovic in action against Slovakia at the 2024 Finals in Malaga; Daria Saville (L) and Perez in doubles action for Australia in last year's Qualifiers tie in Brisbane.

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WOMEN & GIRLS

## ON-SITE ACTION

**THURSDAY 10 APRIL**

#NoLimits Girls Squad players will come together for a 2.5 hour session to build friendships and enhance their tennis skills. Led by experienced coaches, the session will be interactive and fun for girls aged 8-10, providing an engaging atmosphere for young players to make new friends and improve their gameplay.

**COACH CONNECT**

Coach Connect is a nationwide initiative designed to engage, educate, and connect women coaches through mentoring and professional development. Women coaches will gather for a hands-on professional development workshop. This empowering event provides an opportunity for women in coaching to grow, share experiences, and build lasting professional connections.

**FRIDAY 11 APRIL**

The BJK Cup Talent Development Camp, taking place from 10-12 April, will provide a unique and exclusive training experience for top junior players, mentors, and women coaches in the Intellectual Disability (ID & A) and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHOH) pathways. This all-female camp will focus on net play, doubles communication, tournament preparation, nutrition, and personal development.

**SATURDAY 12 APRIL**

The Women's Pop Tennis Competition is a fun and inclusive event for women and girls of all skill levels. Taking place at the Queensland Tennis Centre, this team-based doubles competition focuses on social interaction, accessibility, and team spirit. With a round-robin format ensuring everyone gets ample playing time, the event aims to create a welcoming environment for women and girls to connect and enjoy the sport.

# Empowering WOMEN & GIRLS

As Australia's top-ranked women battle it out on court this week, a range of activities will take place across the Queensland Tennis Centre precinct celebrating women and girls in tennis.

**T**he Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge Qualifiers is not only a showcase of world-class tennis but also a celebration of women's empowerment and inclusivity in the sport.

This year's tournament, taking place at the Queensland Tennis Centre, will feature a series of dynamic events and activations designed to engage, connect, and inspire women and girls.

From skill-building sessions to mentorship opportunities, there is a strong commitment to amplify women's development in tennis, with a focus on creating opportunities for the next generation.

"The Billie Jean King Cup is a pivotal moment in showcasing how far women's tennis has come, not just at the elite level but also in fostering the growth of the sport among young girls and

aspiring coaches," says Andrea Buckridge, Tennis Australia's Head of Women and Girls.

"Tennis is a sport for everybody, and we want women and girls to feel welcome, supported, and encouraged in every part of the game.

"Events like this are so important in creating that sense

of belonging and reminding everyone that there are no limits – on or off the court."

To learn more visit: [tennis.com.au/play/inclusion-and-diversity/women-and-girls](https://tennis.com.au/play/inclusion-and-diversity/women-and-girls)



# JOIN OUR SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY



**ABOUT US:** We're building a future where every girl and woman can play, be active and realise her full potential. Through research, advocacy, community impact and partnerships.

**WHO WE ARE:** We bring together a global community of players, coaches, supporters, donors and fans so that emerging and current Australian players can thrive on the global stage.

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We nurture young talent through our Scholarship Program. The scholarship gives funding to support young female players in achieving their goals. Donations over \$2 made through the Australian Sports Foundation, are tax deductible.

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## MEMBERSHIP

For the Foundation to provide scholarships and conduct research, we need you. Annual membership is just \$50 and life memberships are \$500. Benefits include Priority access to purchase tickets for AO. Ballot access to Wimbledon & French Open, retail discounts, invitations to member only exclusive events, plus more.

**DONATIONS:** You can also support the Women's Tennis Foundation by making a donation to our Scholarship Fund. Through our fundraising partnership with the Australian Sports Foundation, donations are tax deductible! Every dollar makes a difference in supporting our best and brightest talent to achieve their potential to one day represent Australia on the international stage.

Donate today at <https://asf.org.au/donate/womens-tennis-foundation>

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