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## **Leonardo Azevedo to head up coaching dream team for GB National Tennis Academy at University of Stirling**

*Brazilian Head Coach will be supported in Scotland by Colin Fleming, Esteban Carril and Leon Smith in developing next generation of British tennis talent*

Tennis Scotland and the LTA have today announced the appointment of Leonardo Azevedo as Head Coach for its new GB National Tennis Academy at the University of Stirling, which opens this August.

Renowned as a world-class coach - including for his work with former world No.1 Juan Carlos Ferrero - Brazilian-born Azevedo brings vast experience at the highest level of both male and female professional tennis, with a particularly strong record in developing juniors.

The 42-year-old has coached across the world for almost 20 years, from junior level to Grand Slam, Davis Cup and Olympic Games preparation, and has worked with some of the world's most promising players such as Ferrero, Marion Bartoli and Guillermo Garcia Lopez.

Azevedo will lead a new coaching team dedicated to the academy, which is one of only two in the UK and will partner with Dollar Academy, working alongside lead performance coach Colin Fleming and the renowned Spanish coach Esteban Carril, with support from GB Davis Cup team captain Leon Smith.

The programme will also offer eight of Britain's top young tennis players the opportunity to study at one of Scotland's leading independent schools, Dollar Academy. While attending Dollar Academy, the players will benefit from the unrivalled range of academic and co-curricular activities, with access to the widest range of subjects in Scotland.

The GB National Tennis Academy at the University of Stirling has also been boosted by Tennis Scotland's announcement of Dunlop as its official tennis equipment partner in a multi-year deal, which covers the academy.

**Leo Azevedo, GB National Tennis Academy Head Coach:** "It is an honour to be appointed the first Head Coach of the new GB National Tennis Academy at the University of Stirling. Tennis in Britain and Scotland has been on a fantastic journey over the last two decades and we don't need to look far from Stirling to be inspired by just what is possible.

"I'm very passionate about the development of young talent and this will be the perfect environment to achieve that – everything is in place to allow young players to thrive. I could not wish for a better team to work alongside, with Colin, Esteban and Leon all bringing different strengths and experiences to the programme which will help provide young players with a truly world-class tennis education."

Azevedo joins from his current position as Head Coach at international tennis academy Barcelona Total Tennis (BTT) in Spain. He previously spent eight years at the United States Tennis Association as lead national coach of player development and worked with many of the country's top players including Mardy Fish, Sam Querrey, Jack Sock, Donald Young, Taylor Dent and Cici Bellis.

He will be supported by experienced tour player and GB Fed Cup team coach Fleming, winner of eight ATP World Tour doubles titles, a double-competing GB Olympian and a gold medallist at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi 2010. Previously as Tennis Scotland National Coach, Colin has already supported an array of emerging Scottish tennis talent including Jonny O'Mara, Maia Lumsden and Aidan McHugh.

The pair will also be joined by the LTA's Performance Advisor to the GB National Tennis Academy, Esteban Carril as well as Davis Cup captain Leon Smith. Carril, who coached Johanna Konta during her rise from No.150 to 14 in the world in 2015-16, completes the four-strong team.

They will be based at the GB National Tennis Academy at the University of Stirling which aims to play a crucial role in helping Britain become one of the most respected nations in the world for player development by providing bespoke world-class programmes for players. The programme will also offer eight of Britain's top young tennis players the opportunity to study at one of Scotland's leading independent schools, Dollar Academy. While attending Dollar Academy, the players will benefit from the unrivalled range of academic and co-curricular activities, with access to the widest range of subjects in Scotland.

**Blane Dodds, Tennis Scotland Chief Executive:** "It's a genuine coup for tennis in Scotland and Great Britain to attract a coach of Leonardo's calibre, bringing with him a truly world-class reputation. Our recruitment process for this key role was thorough and we have excellent references from some of the most respected coaches in the game, including Ivan Lendl and José Higuera.

"Not only do we have confidence that we've made the best possible appointment but also that we've built a world-class coaching team around him – Colin, Esteban and Leon all providing invaluable support, insight and skillsets.

"With Scotland and Britain recently enjoying such unprecedented levels of success in world tennis through Andy and Jamie Murray and Gordon Reid, the time is now to capitalise on their success and achievements. I'm confident we have put everything possible in place to help young talent thrive in Stirling when the GB National Tennis Academy opens later this year and we all share an excitement at what lies ahead."

The first wave of successful applicants, aged 13–18, start at the GB National Tennis Academy at the University of Stirling this August, part of the LTA's 10-year performance strategy focused on creating a seamless pathway for champions that will nurture a diverse team of players and people. The long-term plan provides a clear route from under-8 to senior major tournament success. Scotland will now deliver the complete junior pathway for the first time as part of the performance framework.

**Scott Lloyd, LTA CEO:** "Stirling is one of two National Academies that will play a critical role in the implementation of our Player Pathway, which sits at the heart of our performance strategy. The LTA is opening tennis up to provide more opportunities to young talent and make Britain one of the most respected nations in the world for tennis player development and Tennis Scotland's fantastic appointment of Leonardo represents a big milestone in our plans. I am confident that with Colin, Esteban and Leon, we have exactly the right team in place."

- ENDS -

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**Additional quotes:**

**Esteban Carril:** “I am highly motivated to nurture young players, using my coaching methodology to help shape future professionals. I am excited to work with aspiring juniors at the GB National Tennis Academy at the University of Stirling with the vision of developing players to fulfil potential and enjoy careers in tennis.”

**Colin Fleming:** “I am delighted to be part of the GB National Tennis Academy and continue my association with Tennis Scotland. I am very excited by the prospect of helping to put in place a world class programme that will help to maximise the potential of our young players throughout Britain. The team that has been assembled is unique and I do believe we will complement each other well which in turn will be a real asset for the academy. I look forward to working with Leo and Esteban and I am sure I will be learning from them as well. This together with the support of Tennis Scotland and LTA teams behind us, makes me confident we can create something special that will have positive results.”

**Leon Smith:** “We are delighted that Leo has been recruited for this vital role. Leo comes with a significant track record internationally for producing world class players. We are all excited to see what he and the team can achieve in Scotland. It is also great to see Davis Cup player Colin Fleming join the coaching team. As the new Fed Cup coach, Colin has impressed and will be another great asset for the GB National Academy in Stirling, while Esteban is a world-class coach in high demand and we are delighted that he completes the team at Stirling.”

**José Higuera:** “I have known and worked with Leo for the past ten years, he was instrumental in the success of our (USTA) programme in Carson and helped develop a very good crop of juniors, including some that achieved top world rankings. I truly believe Leo will be an asset to any serious developmental programme.”

**Patrick McEnroe:** “As the head of USTA PD I could always count on coach Leo, whether as a leader of a particular programme or as a coach and mentor to a particular programme. Leo is a coach’s coach – he loves to work with others and always tries to make the players that he works with more accountable to themselves as players and as individuals. Tennis Scotland and the LTA have hired a great coach, and an even better person in Leo Azevedo.”