



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**KOoyong CLINCHES CHOICE FIELD**

**2010 AAMI CLASSIC  
January 13-16 - Kooyong**

Three top ten players have been confirmed for the 2010 AAMI Classic at Kooyong (January 13-16), two of whom will be competing for the first time:

**NOVAK DJOKOVIC  
JO-WILFRIED TSONGA  
FERNANDO VERDASCO**

They will be joined by:

**FERNANDO GONZALEZ  
ROBIN SODERLING  
TOMMY HAAS  
MARCOS BAGHDATIS**

So where does that leave five time participant, world no. 1 and current AAMI Classic champion, ROGER FEDERER (SUI)? Tournament Director, Colin Stubs, said today at the event's launch at Rippon Lea, Melbourne: "I have been asked by Roger to keep a spot open for him in January's field. He has not yet decided on his Australian Open preparation because of the recent birth of his twin girls, Myla and Charlene, with wife Mirka Vavrinec. Naturally I said I would do so and clarity is not expected until early in the New Year. I have a few options in mind as a fall-back position and will work on those in the coming weeks".

World no. 4, **NOVAK DJOKOVIC** is making his first Kooyong appearance. The 22 year old Serbian, who credits his family with much of his success, has had a good year to date. He won the Dubai tournament in February and took out the inaugural Serbian Open in May. He was a finalist in Miami/Monte Carlo/Rome Masters, Halle and more recently in Cincinnati; semi-finalist in Sydney, Marseille and Madrid Masters and quarter-finalist at the Australian Open, Indian Wells/Montreal Masters and Wimbledon. He was consistently ranked no. 3 from 13.8.07 to 11.5.09.

Seventh-ranked, **JO-WILFRIED TSONGA**, will be a popular new-comer to the **AAMI Classic** eight-man field. The 24 year old Frenchman won the hearts of Australian fans early last year when, after making the semi-finals in Adelaide, he reached the final of the Australian Open, where he lost to Djokovic in four sets. This year he won in Marseille and Johannesburg (bringing his total **ATP World Tour** titles to 4), got to the fourth round at Roland Garros; semis in Montreal (where he ended Federer's 21 match winning streak) and quarter-finals in Brisbane, Sydney, Australian Open, Miami Masters and Rotterdam.

**FERNANDO VERDASCO**, who beat Fernando Gonzalez into third place at the 09 **AAMI Classic**, is returning for the second time. The tenth ranked Spaniard stunned Rafael Nadal (and the rest of the tennis world) at last January's Australian Open by almost defeating him in an epic semi-final match that lasted a record 5 hours, 14 minutes. He has been a consistent performer in the top ten this year - finalist in Brisbane; fourth rounds at Roland Garros & Wimbledon and quarter-finalist in Bastad, Barcelona & Madrid/Rome/Monte Carlo/Miami/Indian Wells Masters events. He took out his first hardcourt title last week in New Haven.

Chilean, **FERNANDO GONZALES** (ranked 11), back for his fourth Kooyong appearance, is a consistent crowd-pleaser. He began the year strongly, reaching the fourth round at the Australian Open and going on to win the Vina del Mar tournament in his home country. He reached the semi-finals in Washington, Barcelona, Rome Masters and the French Open, where he lost to eventual finalist Robin Soderling. Gonzales has won 11 **ATP World Tour** titles and is the first player to have won medals at successive Olympics - Gold in doubles, Bronze in singles in Athens 2004 and singles Silver in Beijing 2008.

The **AAMI Classic** is pleased to announce the debut of Swede, **ROBIN SODERLING**. Presently ranked 12, Soderling reached his first Grand Slam final at Roland Garros (defeated by Federer) after beating Rafael Nadal in the fourth round. He followed up by making the round of 16 at Wimbledon, taking out his fourth career title in Bastad and reaching the quarter-finals in Washington. Earlier this year he won the Sunrise tournament in Florida, made the semi-finals in Auckland and quarters in Brisbane. Soderling is coached by former Swedish pro, Magnus Norman.

**TOMMY HAAS** notches up his fifth Kooyong visit. The 31 year old German (who has lived in the US full-time since the age of 13) has struck a "purple patch" this year, winning in Halle and reaching the semi-finals at Wimbledon (where he lost to Federer, ending a 10 match winning streak) and in LA. He also lost to Federer at Roland Garros, going down in 5 sets, having led 2 sets to 0 in their fourth round match. Presently ranked 21, his other best results have been in San Jose, Houston and Washington where he got to the quarter-finals.

Amiable Cypriot **MARCOS BAGHDATIS** (ranked 110), a popular figure on Kooyong's centre court for the past two years, is back for the third time. Marcos has been working hard to regain the form and confidence which took him to a career high of 8 in 2006. He recently took out the Vancouver Challenger in August and earlier in the year made the quarter-finals in Johannesburg and Delray Beach.

Stubs is well-pleased with the field he has assembled: "We are delighted to welcome Novak, Jo-Wilfried and Robin to Kooyong for the first time" he said at today's launch. "Fernando Verdasco is one of the hottest players on the Tour right now and it's great to have Fernando Gonzalez back for his fourth visit. Tommy Haas has had a resurgence in form this year and Marcos - well, everyone loves Marcos" he added.

Stubs was also excited to announce: "We have entered into a 5 year arrangement with **Tennis Australia** which will guarantee our **7 Network** telecast going forward. The Network will provide approx. 12 hours of live national (metropolitan and regional) coverage over the four days. Added to that is the international distribution by **IEC (International Event & Communication in Sport)**, which went to 18 countries in 2009".

**KLTC President, Ian Hill**, updated the media throng with news of his clubhouse renovations: "The Club renovations are progressing according to schedule, with the anticipated handover prior to Christmas. We look forward to showcasing the club to members, players, media and corporate supporters during the **2010 AAMI Classic**" he said.

The event's new website, [www.aamiclassic.com.au](http://www.aamiclassic.com.au), is now operational. The site has been designed and built by **Bryce Ford** from **Guns4Hire**.

**Wayne Arthurs** was today announced as the "Face of the **AAMI Classic**". Wayne will be involved in a number of activities leading up to and during the event.

Play begins at 11.00 am on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (Jan. 13, 14 &15) and 1.00 pm on Saturday (Jan. 16). Corporate facilities are approx. 80% reserved and tickets are now on sale through Ticketmaster on 13 6100.

For further information, please contact:

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