



PROTOSTAR FOUNDATION'S STATEMENT REGARDING TENNIS AND MENTAL HEALTH

SAN DIEGO, CA
JUNE 3, 2021

The **ProtoStar Foundation** applauds tennis superstar **Naomi Osaka** for speaking out about the importance of mental health among athletes. When a young athlete says she is suffering from “long bouts of depression,” we need to pay close attention. When a junior competitor says he is experiencing anxiety and depression, we must take that seriously. For all too long, athletes with mental health struggles have been dismissed as being somehow weak or “not tough enough.” In so doing, not only do we fail to give these young athletes much-needed support, but we also miss the opportunity to provide them the tools to deal with their mental health issues – tools that would help them live healthy and well-balanced lives.

ProtoStar is seeking to change old attitudes about mental health challenges with the **Matt Stevenson Junior Tennis Tournament**. This is the first – and so far only – USTA-sanctioned junior tennis tournament in the country to promote mental health as part of the tournament. We call it *The Power of Mental Health*®. The main message to the players ranging from ages 11 to 18 is the importance of staying mentally healthy. Information about depression, anxiety, and suicide prevention is presented at the tournament by professional organizations in a youth-friendly, inspiring, and uplifting way. There is practical information on how to reach out to a friend, what signs to look for, and what to do if the friend is depressed or thinking about self-harm.

These are difficult topics to talk about, but we must talk about them. Talking can save lives. That is the whole point of this tournament: to make these issues part of the conversation – whether on the tennis court, in the locker room, or simply around the kitchen table. The more we talk about these issues, the more we can destigmatize mental illness. We need more tennis idols, like Naomi Osaka, Coco Gaugh, and Jannik Sinner, to raise awareness about mental health issues so kids can understand that mental health struggles exist even among some of the elite players.

This year, the tournament will kick off in San Diego on September 11-13, 2021 and continue on to New York on September 17-19, 2021 and Washington, D.C. on October 2-4, 2021. For more information about how to sign up for the Matt Stevenson Junior Tennis Tournament, please visit: <https://protostargroup.com/portfolio/matt-stevenson-junior-tennis-tournament/>.

Fees and donations from the tournament will benefit the **Matt Stevenson Junior Tennis Fund**. The Fund has two purposes: (1) to support junior tennis programs in low- to moderate-income areas so as to help make tennis accessible to all kids, regardless of their socioeconomic



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background; and (2) to provide financial aid to promising junior tennis players who would like to attend a Division 1 school and/or aspire to become touring professionals. More details about the Fund and the criteria for funding could be found at: <https://protostargroup.com/matt-stevenson-junior-tennis-fund/>.

Media contact: Marla Giummarra, +1-917-442-6586; marla@lipsoncommunications.com.



About ProtoStar

The ProtoStar Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, is part of the ProtoStar Group, a set of pioneering companies that find resourceful ways to fund innovative projects and ideas. Founded by Gary P. Poon, it identifies, develops, and invests in *prototypes* that will hopefully become *star* projects, hence the portmanteau "ProtoStar." It seeks to **empower** organizations to better serve unserved and underserved communities worldwide, **challenge** nonprofit entities to be self-sustaining and more entrepreneurial, and **transform** the way in which funders engage in philanthropy.

For more information, please visit www.protostargroup.com or contact Gary P. Poon at gpoon@protostargroup.com.