



Cincinnati Open 2026 Preview: Zverev Leads the Charge as Qualifying Kicks Off

Description

The **Cincinnati Open 2026** gets underway in earnest today as qualifying begins at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio. With the main draw running from 13 to 23 August, this ATP Masters 1000 and WTA 1000 combined event is one of the most prestigious hard-court tune-ups on the calendar ahead of the US Open – and this year’s edition has all the ingredients for a memorable fortnight.

The Men’s Draw: Zverev Favoured, But the Door Is Open

Alexander Zverev enters as the top seed and the clear favourite. The German world number one arrives in Cincinnati in strong form on hard courts, and his powerful serve, heavy baseline game, and improved clutch performances in the big moments make him a formidable proposition in a Masters-level draw. Zverev has never won the Cincinnati title, and that omission gives him added motivation this week.

The storyline dominating discussion, however, is the absence of both Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz. Both top contenders have been ruled out through injury, depriving the tournament of the rivalry that has defined men’s tennis in recent seasons. Sinner and Alcaraz together represent a generational shift in the sport, and their absence opens the draw considerably – creating real opportunity for the chasing pack.



The 2026 Cincinnati Open features a world-class singles field at the Lindner Family Tennis Center (Image: Cincinnati Open)

Novak Djokovic is the name that immediately catches the eye among the remaining field. The Serbian legend has an extraordinary record in Cincinnati and has shown no signs of slowing down. His reading of the game, tactical flexibility, and competitive drive remain as sharp as ever, and on a surface where experience counts, he must be considered a genuine title threat. Félix Auger-Aliassime — who we followed closely in our [National Bank Open Montreal feature](#) — is another player with the game to cause an upset on the hard courts of Ohio. The Canadian’s aggressive serve-and-forehand combination is well-suited to this surface.

Daniil Medvedev, Alex de Minaur, and Taylor Fritz complete a field that is, despite the headline absences, still extremely competitive. Any of these players could win the title if they find their best tennis over the course of a tough week.

The Women’s Draw: Williams Sisters Add Box-Office Appeal

On the women’s side, the Cincinnati Open 2026 has been handed a ready-made narrative with the entry of Serena Williams and Venus Williams as a doubles wild card team – with Venus also receiving a singles wild card. Serena’s competitive return to a WTA 1000 event is the most-discussed story in women’s tennis this week, and the sisters’ presence in Cincinnati will draw viewers and spectators well beyond the usual tennis faithful.

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Hard-court intensity at the Cincinnati Open â?? one of tennisâ??s most demanding events
(Image: Cincinnati Open)

Beyond the Williams factor, the womenâ??s draw features the depth and quality expected of a WTA 1000 event in the build-up to the US Open. Cincinnati has historically been a tournament where match-hardened competitors use the week to sharpen their games ahead of Flushing Meadows. Given that the [US Open 2026](#) looms on the horizon, the stakes for every performance in Ohio carry added weight.

What to Watch This Fortnight

Cincinnati has a track record of producing upsets and unexpected champions. The hard courts at Lindner Family Tennis Center tend to favour players who can flatten the ball and take time away from their opponents â?? a style that does not always correlate with tour ranking. Young players looking to make a breakthrough on the big stage, as well as veterans hunting a title that has so far eluded them, often find Cincinnati a productive hunting ground.

Qualifying continues today and tomorrow, 11â??12 August, with the main draw beginning on 13 August. The finals are scheduled for 22 and 23 August, leaving players a short but important window to prepare before the US Open commences. For Singapore fans, the time-zone difference means the prime-time matches will be available to watch in the early hours â?? but for those willing to set the alarm, the quality on display will make it worthwhile.

Stay tuned to the [Little Big Red Dot Sports section](#) for ongoing coverage of the Cincinnati Open 2026 throughout the fortnight.

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