

Serena Williams Returns To Queenâ??s Club: HSBC Championships 2026 Womenâ??s Invitational Preview

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The grass court season is upon us, and west Londonâ??s Queenâ??s Club will play host to one of tennisâ??s most extraordinary subplots this June: the return of Serena Williams. As the HSBC Championships 2026 gets under way (9â??15 June), a special womenâ??s invitational alongside the main menâ??s draw has captured the imagination of the tennis world â?? and Williams, 44, is its headline act.

With Wimbledon approaching (28 June to 12 July 2026), Queenâ??s Club represents the perfect grass court proving ground. For context on where the menâ??s season stands, read our coverage of Alexander Zverevâ??s Roland Garros triumph and Jannik Sinnerâ??s shock Paris exit, both of which set the stage for an unpredictable grass season. Follow all our coverage in the Sports section.



Serena Williams returns to competitive grass court tennis at Queenâ??s Club 2026.

The Greatest Returns To Grass

Serena Williams stepped away from professional tennis at the 2022 US Open â?? or, as she carefully put it at the time, she chose to â??evolve awayâ?• from the game. The distinction was deliberate, and as it turns out, prophetic. Since 2022, Williams has remained closely connected to the sport through ownership in World TeamTennis, exhibition appearances, and a quiet commitment to maintaining her physical conditioning. But this is different. A competitive return to Queenâ??s Club â?? one of the most revered grass court venues in the world â?? is a statement.

Williams has won seven Wimbledon titles across her extraordinary career, and grass remains her most beloved surface. Queenâ??s Club, with its close-cut lawns and fast-paced rallies, is where she first demonstrated her dominance in the build-up to multiple All England Club campaigns. Her decision to compete in the 2026 womenâ??s invitational sends an unmistakable signal: Wimbledon is the target, and Queenâ??s Club is the warm-up.

Physically, those who have seen her practise in the lead-up to the HSBC Championships say she looks formidable â?? her serve, always her single greatest weapon, reportedly generating pace comparable to her peak years. At 44, the reflexes may have slowed marginally, but the tactical intelligence, the competitive drive, and the sheer force of will that made her the greatest womenâ??s player in history remain fully intact.

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Harriet Dart â?? The British Hope



Harriet Dart is the home favourite for the Queenâ??s Club 2026 womenâ??s invitational.

Among those lining up alongside Williams is British number one Harriet Dart, who has quietly developed into one of the WTAâ??s most consistent grass court performers. The Londonerâ??s powerful baseline game and flat ball-striking are ideally suited to the surface, and competing before a partisan home crowd at Queenâ??s Club will bring the very best out of her. Dart has spoken openly

about how the grass season is her favourite period of the year â?? and with Wimbledon looming, she arrives at Queenâ??s Club with purpose.

A quarter-final run at the Rothesay Open Nottingham heading into Queenâ??s Club suggests she is rounding into form at precisely the right moment. She will not be overawed by the presence of Williams â?? Dart is a seasoned professional who has competed against the worldâ??s best â?? and an upset in this invitational format is entirely within her capability.

Jaqueline Cristian â?? Romaniaâ??s Dark Horse

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Jaqueline Cristian brings an unpredictable game to Queenâ??s Club 2026.

Romaniaâ??s Jaqueline Cristian arrives at Queenâ??s Club as something of a wildcard, but one with recent pedigree on faster surfaces. The 27-year-old has climbed steadily through the WTA rankings â?? her combination of pace, two-handed backhand and aggressive return of serve making her a difficult opponent on grass. Cristian has spoken about how her game has evolved significantly over the past two seasons, particularly in terms of tactical flexibility, and Queenâ??s Club could be the stage for a breakthrough performance.

The Wimbledon Countdown Begins

Whatever unfolds in the invitational draws themselves, the overarching narrative of the 2026 grass season is Serena Williams and the Wimbledon question. She has not formally announced an entry to the All England Club â?? not yet â?? but those close to her suggest that a strong showing at Queenâ??s Club would be the trigger for a full Wimbledon campaign. Few storylines in sport carry more weight than the greatest of all time returning for one final attempt at glory on the lawns of SW19.

For Harriet Dart, the grass season represents something different: a chance to be remembered as the British player who ended a home Wimbledon drought. For Jaqueline Cristian, it is an opportunity to announce herself on a global stage. For tennis fans everywhere, Queenâ??s Club 2026 â?? with its extraordinary cast of characters â?? is unmissable.

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The grass is green. The balls are fresh. And Serena Williams is back.

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