

Australian Open backed to go ahead if AFL-style training bubble can be set up

Australian Open boss Craig Tilly has flatly refused to stage a [2021 Melbourne Grand Slam](#) if players are forced into two weeks of rigorous management. Tilly, however, is "fully" confident that the Open will go ahead as planned from 18 to 31 January, with regular leadership events.

He has relaxed border restrictions in the Australian state and federal governments and is giving special approval to establish a training bubble for the world's tennis elite.

Ash Barty lost the Grand Slam but is ranked number one in the world of tennis

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"If a player has to be quarantined and detained at a hotel just two weeks before their season, it won't happen," Tilly told AAP on Thursday. "You can't ask players to separate for two weeks and then step aside and get ready to play a great slam."

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With great enthusiasm, Roger Federer and Serena Williams, both 40-year-olds, have already promised to open, but Tilly says players will not be able to play if they don't prepare properly.

"The challenge for us at the moment is that the border is still closed," he said. "So we got a plan on the basis that there would be all open borders. So we are working with all the state governments. We fully acknowledge that everyone from abroad had to live in isolation for two weeks.

"What we are discussing or trying to reach an agreement on is that we have set up a separate environment where they can take and go to training in hotels and courts within these two weeks.

"It's similar to the AFL. The difference we have with the AFL is that we are bringing in players from abroad so the bet is much higher.

Both the US Open and the French Open have advanced successfully over the past six weeks.

Significantly, players were not asked to isolate, but instead had to operate in a bubble and undergo regular COVID-19 testing.

Adding to Tilly's confidence that the [Australian Open](#) would be held, perhaps with 25 per cent fan power and allowing all three players to be recruited in three teams, New York was the only one in more than 10,000 trials to contract the Frenchman Benoit Pyre to coronavirus.

Tilly is more optimistic that the entire summer schedule will remain in place, including the multi-city ATP Cup, but it is incredible about reopening state borders.

"We are spending time now. We need commitment from the government and health officials," he said.

"We should know in the next two weeks, maybe a month, that this could happen: the borders are about to open and then we can have a multi-city event.

"If we can't have a multi-city event, we've been able to rethink everything."

If the border is not reopened, the Cincinnati Open Flushing Meadow before the US Open cancels the ATP Cup just as the Cincinnati Open was held and possibly the Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart international tournaments are held in Melbourne.

"Anything is possible now," Tiley said. "Everything is still on the table"

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