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Medvedev Criticizes 'Unfair' Wimbledon Ban on Russian Players

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Daniil Medvedev. **Carine06 (CC BY-SA 2.0)**

Russian tennis star Daniil Medvedev has criticized the banning of Russian and Belarusian athletes from this summer's Wimbledon tournament as "unfair."

The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC), which runs the prestigious tournament, indefinitely barred Russian and Belarusian tennis players from competing last month in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Speaking ahead of this week's Geneva Open in Switzerland, Medvedev, the men's tennis world No. 2, said he finds the ban "unfair" but would be "happy to play" if a decision was made to reverse it.

"On the one hand, I can understand [the decision] and, on the other, I find it unfair," Medvedev told Swiss media Sunday, according to the state-run TASS news agency.

The decision to ban Russian and Belarusian players from Wimbledon was met with

controversy, with critics saying sports should remain non-political and that it unfairly punishes athletes who may oppose the war.

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Shortly after Russia sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, Medvedev, 26, said he was "all for peace."

Medvedev's compatriot Andrey Rublev, ranked No. 7 in the world, famously wrote "No war please" on a camera lens after winning a semifinal match days after the war in Ukraine began.

Men's world No. 1 Novak Djokovic slammed the AELTC's move to ban Russian and Belarusian players from Wimbledon last month in an interview with ESPN.

"I cannot support the decision of Wimbledon, I think it is crazy. When politics interferes with sport, the result is not good," the 34-year-old Serbian said.

The Kremlin meanwhile accused Wimbledon's organizers of turning Russian athletes into "hostages to political prejudice."

Wimbledon chairman Ian Hewitt has defended the AELTC's decision, saying "there is no viable alternative in this truly exceptional and tragic situation."

The tournament is set to take place from June 27 to July 10.

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