

# New Perspectives for Tennis Players in Poland After Coronavirus Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to show the new, professional and above all prospective tennis league that emerged after the end of the pandemic. Furthermore, to show how the Polish government is involved in helping professional tennis in Poland. Source analysis was used to conduct this study using the content analysis technique and the theoretical tool of a set of questions to the sources. The results of the research showed that the Super League can be a promising venture and can give great benefits to the players, including new international contacts, money, performing in front of large audiences, but most importantly, experience. Moreover, this league is supported by governmental entities with patronage and funding. Moreover, this is not the only tennis event in which the Polish government is involved. They have also extended their patronage to the Polish National Championships and have partially financed the most developed tennis and sports center in Poland. This study can be a prelude to further research on the super league, but also the government's efforts to develop professional tennis in Poland. In addition, it is recommended that further research be conducted on the super league and what opportunities it has given to players after the end of its first season.

*Keywords: pandemic, tennis, sport, professional, government, new era*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the coronavirus pandemic in both Poland and the world, many non-essential activities were frozen. Sport was one of them. Many times, during the lockdown sport facilities were closed, including tennis courts. No tournaments or training camps were held. For professional tennis players the world stopped. However, life in the new era seems to be very promising for young professional tennis players in Poland for two important reasons - a new professional tennis league and the government's involvement in projects closely related to tennis, which will be the subject of this study.

The present study is significant due to the lack of previous research conducted on professional tennis in Poland. Moreover, it can serve as a basis for further research on this topic at a later time, because the main limitation of this study is the period in which it is carried, moreover, it is conducted only on one sport. This study is conducted during the implementation of the new league; thus, its effects will only be able to be assessed after its completion in December this year.

Nevertheless, the limitation presented earlier does not affect the value of the study. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to find out what opportunities are available for players participating in the super league and how the Polish government is trying to help develop professional tennis in Poland. The following research questions were posed to address the aforementioned objectives: what opportunities does the Superleague provide for participating players? How is the Polish government involved in the development of professional tennis in Poland?

## 2. METHOD

The method of source analysis and the technique of qualitative content analysis were used to conduct this study. A set of questions to the sources was applied as the research tool. The questions were as follows: What new perspectives does the super league offer to the participants? What benefits can players get from participating in the super league? How can the government assist in developing professional sport in Poland? The answers to these questions should lead to acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses posed, which read as

follows: Participation in the Super League provides the player with opportunities to earn money, to perform in front of a wide audience, and to gain experience and play against players who compete at the highest possible level; The Polish government is involved in the development of professional tennis in Poland through patronage of major events by both the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and various state-owned companies, and financially supports these events. The analysis will be conducted on the official website of the Superleague, the Polish Tennis Federation, and the government website of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism.

### 3. RESULTS AND DUSCUSSION

Superleague is a novel project that emerged after the end of the coronavirus pandemic. It is a team tournament in which Polish tennis clubs compete for the title of Polish Team Champion and cash prizes of 700,000 PLN for the winner, 500,000 PLN for the runner-up, and 300,000 PLN for taking the third place. This is the first such project in the history of Polish tennis. Despite the fact that the participants of the league are Polish tennis clubs, there was a possibility for them to transfer a player, also from abroad. The result is the participation of many famous players from outside Poland at the top of the ATP and WTA rankings. It is also worth noting that a small number of professional tennis tournaments are held in Poland, and their cast, as a rule, due to the low rank and number of points to be won, is much weaker than that in the Super League. In addition, it is worth noting that the league is also attended by former highly decorated players such as Agnieszka Radwańska and Mariusz Frystenberg, representing the Warsaw MERA Tennis Club. Media coverage of the league is also important, as it is broadcast on one of the most popular sports channels in Poland - Polsat Sport News, as well as on their website. What's more, the Superleague has its own channel where you can watch broadcasts from wherever the Superleague is currently taking place (Sliga, 2022). Also important from the perspective of the Polish player, as well as the research being conducted, is a provision in the regulations stating that a player who holds Polish citizenship must perform (Regulamin, 2021). This information gives an answer to the first and second question to the source posed in the methodological part - what new perspectives does the super league give to the participants? What benefits can athletes get from participating in the super league? Namely, based on the above-mentioned information, younger players participating in the superleague can compete with the world's top players - past and present, so they gain valuable experience, and can make new international contacts without having to travel to foreign tournaments. In addition, they can also get a lot of publicity, thanks to the well-prepared media background and wide coverage of this league in the media. What is more, foreign tennis players and popular names attract a lot of fans, thanks to which younger or less known players can present themselves to a much wider audience. It is also worth mentioning that the players sign a contract with the club to play in the club's colors and some clubs such as Olimpia Poznań reward their players financially, however the contracts are agreed with the players individually and their details are kept secret.

The answer to the third question can also be found on the official Super League website, as the "our partners" tab shows many logos related to the Polish government. First of all, the Title Sponsor, that is Totalizator Sportowy. Its shareholders are 100% state treasury (BIP, 2022). In addition, one of the main sponsors is Enea, a Polish energy company in which the state has a stake of more than 50 percent (ENEA, 2022). However, the list does not end with these two items, other state-owned companies such as KGHM Polska Miedź also contribute to the sponsorship. Moreover, one of the main partners is Polski Holding Hotelowy, and the whole league is under the patronage of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and the Institute of Niepodległa (Sliga, 2022). This information provides an answer to the question posed in the theoretical part, nevertheless, the Polish government also has other merits for Polish tennis. While still in pandemonium in 2020, the Ministry of Sport and Tourism announced during the Sports and Business Gala that they will support the construction of the Polish Tennis Federation Training Center with 11.5 million PLN. The Sports and Tennis Complex is located in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, a city several dozen kilometers from the capital (GOV, 2020). Due to the highly developed infrastructure, it is a great place for training camps of Polish national team in each age category. What is more, some of the previously mentioned partners such as Lotto or Ministry of Sport and Tourism, but also other companies closely related to the government such as Polskie Radio or Lotos are also supporting the Polish National Championships in which the prize pool in 2022 is more than one million PLN (Mistrzostwa Polski, 2022). Due to the record amount of prizes in this year's Polish Championships there is a possibility of appearing players who are or have been successful in tournaments of the ATP or WTA rank. Such a cast of

players at the Polish National Championships would certainly provide more publicity and a wider audience for the tournament.

In conclusion, both hypotheses presented in the theoretical part should be accepted in their entirety because the Super League, as presented earlier, has many opportunities to offer professional tennis players and the Polish government is strongly committed to the development of professional tennis in Poland through patronage or financial support.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The involvement of state entities in the development of professional sport, especially after the pandemic period when practicing sport was difficult, gives the players new opportunities and perspectives for development. Among other things, they can finally earn money at tournaments in Poland, and have the opportunity to measure themselves and make new contacts with foreign players without having to travel to foreign tournaments. Both the Super League and the Polish National Championships offer the opportunity to present themselves to a wide audience thanks to great media publicity, but also the support of governmental entities. In addition, the newly established Kozierki Tennis Center, which was partially funded by the government, has excellent training facilities providing opportunities for young tennis players.

It should be noted, however, that the research took place during the league, so it is important to examine the feelings and assess the results of this project after the league has ended. Nevertheless, at this point in time, the previously stated thesis regarding the super league can be confirmed. Moreover, it is also worth noting that, as it was previously mentioned, the research focuses on a specific sport, which is tennis, however, it would be worth extending the research on government activity for professional sport to other sports.

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