Garcia, Kasatkina Begin 2018 Charleston Campaigns on Crowded Tuesday

BY NICK MCCARVEL

There is no need for the Tuesday blues at the Volvo Car Open. Why? Because of all the great tennis set to be played on the famous green clay courts of the Family Circle Tennis Center.

Defending champion Daria Kasatkina kicks off her 2018 campaign, as does No. 1 seed Caroline Garcia and three other seeded stars set to hit the court. It also marks the first session of evening tennis, with Kasatkina getting a challenge in the form of American Christina Mchale under the Volvo Car Stadium lights.

While they are the highest ranked players in action, it’s not just the names of Kasatkina and Garcia that you will recognize on the Tuesday schedule. Also: former champion Samantha Stosur; former finalist Elena Vesnina; and Americans Taylor Townsend, Lauren Davis, and Bethanie Mattek-Sands, Bethanie playing on the doubles court with a new partner.

The first matches of the day on Stadium and Althea Gibson Club Court are two of the most intriguing, with Australian Ashleigh Barty, the No. 9 seed, set to meet rising American star Sofia Kenin, who is just 19 years old. Barty is fresh off winning the doubles title in Miami.

While that match happens on the big stage, Club Court will host the crafty Townsend, a Chicago native, against Heather Watson, a British player with a solid backcourt game.

Stosur gets another American, Kristie Ahn, before Genie Bouchard meets Sara Errani in a battle of former major finalists on Stadium. Garcia will close the day session there with a test against Varvara Lepchenko, who took out a former winner here, Andrea Petkovic, in Monday’s first round.

Garcia leads her head-to-head with Lepchenko 3-1, though this is their first meeting on clay.

Kasatkina has appeared cool, calm and collected in the days leading up to the start of her title defense. The Russian, still only 20 years old, comes to Daniel Island two weeks after reaching the final at Indian Wells. She said she knew little of what to expect as a defending champ at an event for the first time.

What else should you be watching for? No. 16 seed Vesnina meets Madison Brengle of the U.S., Davis has Tatjana Maria, two Czechs battle it out with Katerina Siniakova and Kristyna Pliskova meeting, and Claire Liu, the reigning Wimbledon junior champion from the U.S., plays Poland’s Magda Linette.

It is sure to be a packed Charleston doubles crowd for Mattek-Sands and new partner Andrea Sestini Hlavackova. Mattek-Sands won last year’s doubles title with Lucie Safarova, who is missing this year’s event due to illness. The team, seeded No. 2, plays the last match of the day on Court 3.