

\$1M prize, big names for 2025 US Open mixed doubles spark backlash

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AP TENNIS WRITER

Grand Slam singles champions such as Jannik Sinner, Carlos Alcaraz, Iga Swiatek and Madison Keys will be playing for a little extra money — OK, a lot of extra money, by any standard: \$1 million to the winning duo — and trying to get their hands on a trophy in the U.S. Open's overhauled mixed doubles tournament.

The best of the best at doubles, meanwhile, are not so excited about what one of last year's mixed champions in New York, Sara Errani, labeled "sad" and "nonsense" in an interview with The Associated Press. She and Andrea Vavassori, who'll be defending their title, are the only true doubles team competing Tuesday and Wednesday at Flushing Meadows.

A year ago, only two highly ranked singles players participated.

"It would be like if, at the Olympics, they didn't let the actual high jumpers participate, and instead had basketball players compete in the high jump because it's more 'interesting.' If you want to do that, I guess you can, but you can't award them medals," Errani said. "You can't have a Grand Slam doubles (trophy) and not let doubles players take part. ... You're excluding them from their sport. It's dishonest."

WHO IS PLAYING IN THE 2025 U.S. OPEN MIXED DOUBLES TOURNAMENT?

The top seeds, based on their combined singles



Julia Nikhinson/AP Photo

Sara Errani, of Italy, and Andrea Vavassori, of Italy, react after defeating Taylor Townsend, of the United States, and Donald Young, of the United States, in the mixed doubles final of the U.S. Open tennis championships, Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024, in New York.

rankings, are Jessica Pegula, the 2024 U.S. Open runner-up, and Jack Draper, a semifinalist a year ago. He's onto his third partner after Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen and former No. 2 Paula Badosa withdrew with injuries. Their initial opponents might be the most-anticipated pairing: five-time Slam champ Alcaraz and 2021 U.S. Open winner Emma Raducanu.

Other teams include Sinner and 10-time major doubles champion Katerina Siniakova, Swiatek and Casper Ruud, Keys and Frances Tiafoe, Venus Williams and Reilly Opelka, Taylor Fritz and Elena Rybakina, Naomi Osaka and Gael Monfils, Novak Djokovic and Olga Danilovic, and Daniil Medvedev and Mirra Andreeva.

"It's going to count as a real Grand Slam. The prize money is great," said Fritz, the runner-up to Sinner in singles at Flushing Meadows

a year ago. "We are 100% there to try to win it."

Said Tiafoe: "Seeing the prize money, everyone was like, 'We're going, no matter what.'"

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT MIXED DOUBLES AT THE U.S. OPEN?

What's different? Put plainly: everything. That includes the top prize of \$1 million a year after Errani and Vavassori split \$200,000.

Even the rules are changing, with sets played to four games instead of six until Wednesday's final, no-Ad scoring, and match tie-breakers instead of a third set. There are 16 teams instead of 32. The matches were shifted from the latter stages of the U.S. Open, overlapping with singles, to before next Sunday's start of the main singles brackets. Half the field is based on singles rankings, and the other half was simply

chosen by the U.S. Tennis Association.

That's how the singles stars got involved. It's also why some say the whole thing is a bit silly.

Gaby Dabrowski, a Canadian who owns two major championships in mixed doubles and earned the women's doubles trophy at the 2023 U.S. Open, tried to get into the field with Felix Auger-Aliassime, but they were not among the USTA's wild-card selections.

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