

PRESS RELEASE

Kim Clijsters Academy to cease activities from 1 July

Bree, 5 May 2022 – The Kim Clijsters Academy, an initiative of the former world number one from Limburg, is to cease all activities from 1 July. From that date the Academy will no longer provide the tennis and paddle tennis lessons for the clubs based at the sports complex on the Watertorenstraat in Bree. *“Eight years ago Kim had the dream of developing an internationally renowned training school in Bree, but due in part to the corona epidemic and Kim's move to the US, we must now end this dream,”* says Ruben Clijsters, Kim's nephew and manager of the Academy. *“After a thorough financial analysis of the situation we have decided to cease all activities. This is hard for all the team, and certainly also for Kim, but we have given it long and careful thought and this is the only option.”*

The Kim Clijsters Academy opened in 2014. At the sports complex on the Watertorenstraat in Bree – in which Golazo boss Bob Verbeeck is currently the majority shareholder – Academy trainers provided training for local members of the De Boneut tennis club as well as for international players and national talents and champions. A number of top players currently train daily at the club, including such famous names as Elise Mertens (WTA - 22) and upcoming talent Sofia Costoulas (ITF - 2). *“We are going to hold meetings with each of them to discuss exactly what this means for them,”* says Ruben Clijsters.

“We knew in advance that it was a huge challenge to develop a truly international school in a provincial town such as Bree and we did everything possible to make it a success,” says Ruben Clijsters. *“But after eight years we had to face the fact that we had not succeeded in growing this initiative into a truly major success. We always tried to maintain democratic prices for local players. We wanted to make it possible for everybody to take lessons here through the Academy. But for that we must of course attract sufficient numbers. We did not succeed in attracting the large numbers of foreign players to Bree that were needed to make the enterprise profitable. There were several reasons for this, but it is no secret that in the past couple of years the corona epidemic certainly did not help. Travel became impossible and the situation became very difficult.”*

A genuine revival after the pandemic did not materialise. The Kim Clijsters Academy had also been operating at a loss for several years. *“That is a situation that you can manage for a while but the time comes when you have to stop,”* says Ruben Clijsters. *“It is a great pity, but we also want clarity for our partners and trainers. They deserve it. To everyone... the players, the parents, the grandparents, the trainers, the volunteers, the partners, the sponsors, the visitors, the town...to everyone who was involved in this adventure, we extend our heartfelt thanks.”*

The decision taken by the Kim Clijsters Academy is totally independent of the operation of the clubs, the complex and all other activities at the Bree site. The complex will remain open and all activities will continue as normal after 30 June, with the sole exception of the Academy.

“Over a period of 10 years we lived some fantastic moments at the Academy. I have seen so many people enjoying themselves on the tennis courts, watched children grow and develop their skills. A pure pleasure and for my part also I want to extend my warmest thanks to everyone involved. I have always had the feeling that I was giving something back to the sport that had given me so much over all these years. So I also very much regret that this initiative was unable to grow into a major success. Now I just want to take the time to sort out everything correctly with all those involved and we will then see what the future brings.”