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## Boston Lobsters Tennis Team Moving to Middleton Club

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MIDDLETON — Ferncroft Country Club will become the new home of the Boston Lobsters professional tennis team this summer and will host two of the sport's most famous players, Martina Navratilova and Venus Williams.

Boston Lobsters owner Bahar Uttam has scheduled a press conference tomorrow morning at the Ferncroft to announce the move.

The Lobsters will play seven matches in July at Ferncroft's outdoor tennis courts. Navratilova, the winningest women's tennis player of all time, will play two matches for the Lobsters at Ferncroft. Defending Wimbledon champion Williams is scheduled to play there on July 10 as a member of the Philadelphia team.

"For kids on the North Shore to have the opportunity to come in and look at some of the old stars and some of the new, upcoming stars, it's tremendous," said Cory Tusler, the tennis manager at Ferncroft Country Club.

Uttam declined to comment on the move until tomorrow's press conference.

The Lobsters are part of World Team Tennis, a coed professional league founded by Billie Jean King in 1974. The Lobsters had been dormant from 1978 to 2004 when Uttam, a former technology company owner who lives in Cambridge, re-established the team.

The Lobsters played their home matches at Harvard University the last three years and drew crowds ranging from 700 to 2,700, according to Uttam. This year, he began looking for a home site on the North Shore, which he said has a strong core of tennis fans and the demographics to support a team.

Uttam also considered the Bass River Tennis Club in Beverly. But Bass River does not have outdoor courts, and club owner Manny Barros has scrapped plans to build an outdoor stadium.

Barros said a new stadium would have cost him \$300,000 to build, and Uttam was offering him only \$40,000 for the Lobsters to play there.

"It made no economic sense," Barros said.

Barros said he will offer Bass River as the indoor home for the Lobsters in case of rain. Ferncroft does not have indoor courts.

Ferncroft Country Club, which is located in both Danvers and Middleton, was bought two years ago by Virginia-based Affinity Golf Management. Tusler said the company has revived the club's tennis program and improved its tennis courts.

The Lobsters are coached by former player Tim Mayotte. The players will be selected at the World Team Tennis draft on April 1 in Miami.

The league has already held a draft of "marquee players," some of the top players in the game who commit to playing two or three matches in the 14-match season. The teams charge higher tickets prices when the marquee players play.

The 51-year-old Navratilova is the Lobsters' marquee player. She also played for the team in 1978, 2005 and 2006.

#### Boston Lobsters at Ferncroft Country Club

**Monday, July 7,** vs. Delaware Smash

**\*Thursday, July 10,** vs. Philadelphia Freedoms

**Saturday, July 12,** vs. New York Buzz

**Sunday, July 13,** vs. New York Sportimes

**\*Wednesday, July 16,** vs. Springfield Lasers

**Friday, July 18,** vs. Washington Kastles

**\*Saturday, July 19,** vs. Newport Beach Breakers

Tickets are \$50 for box seats, \$25 for reserved seats and \$10 for children on "non-marquee nights."

Prices increase to \$60 for box seats, \$30 for reserved seats and \$15 for children on "marquee nights."

A season pass is \$250 for a box seat and \$125 for a reserved seat.

\* Marquee night — Venus Williams scheduled to play on July 10, Martina Navratilova on July 16 & 19