



## **Ballito Pro Presented By O'Neill 2020 Postponed**

*Announcement follows WSL's postponement of all events through June*



*Image: Jordy Smith (ZAF) at the Ballito Pro Presented by O'Neill 2019. Credit: WSL/Janssens*

**BALLITO, KwaDukuza, South Africa (Wednesday, May 20, 2020)** -The continued COVID-19 pandemic has placed wide and significant restrictions on the staging of events as well as international and domestic travel. Such limitations have obviously affected major sporting events around the world and recently the World Surf League (WSL) announced the postponement of all events through June 2020 and a redesigned tour structure for 2021. As a consequence of this announcement, the Ballito Pro Presented by O'Neill 2020 scheduled for June/July 2020 is postponed.

The WSL and the KwaDukuza Municipality (KDM) are continuing to work with various governmental authorities to monitor the situation and determine the way forward in respect of the Ballito Pro Presented by O'Neill event.

"As the local authority for the region, KwaDukuza Municipality's primary focus during these unprecedented times is directed to protecting our communities and fighting the pandemic. It is recognised that the Ballito Pro Presented by O'Neill International Sporting and Lifestyle Festival is a key economic driver for the region, therefore, as the Council, we will continue to strategise and seek approaches to support and assist the organisers towards the sustainability of the event going forward," said Acting Mayor Cllr D Govender.

“We believe that the contribution of the event to a variety of sectors will be a critical ingredient in the KwaDukuza Municipality's Tourism Recovery Plan (KDMTRP). I would like also to send the Council's words of appreciation and solidarity to all our partners, participants and business community of KwaDukuza who contributed to making this an unsurpassed event. We reaffirm that Events/Sports Tourism remains a strategic driver in the KDMTRP. See you in 2021, in the debut year of Surfing as an Olympic Sport.”

“On behalf of the entire team at O’Neill we respect and support the decision to suspend this year’s event and we believe that all focus right now must be aimed at getting us through this devastating pandemic,” said Paul Canning, Brand Manager O’Neill (Sector Group). “We are understandably disappointed, as we had an amazing campaign and programme of events lined up for this year’s festival, but right now the priority has to be the safety and health of the athletes, officials and the fans. We look forward to hosting an exciting and even more compelling program of events in 2021.”

“Coronavirus is having huge consequences for sporting events around the globe and we didn’t take this decision lightly,” said WSL EMEA GM, Francisco Spinola. “The Ballito Pro Presented by O’Neill is a really important event for us and we look forward to working with all involved to bring this event back as soon as it is safely possible.”

“WSL Africa and all our surfers would like to thank the Mayor and Councillors for their grateful understanding of where we stand right now with the Covid-19 crisis which continues to grow day by day. To all the fans and the community of Ballito you are our first priority when it comes to your safety,” said Colin Fitch WSL Africa Operations Manager.

“The Ballito Pro presented by O’Neill has become the best stop on the World Surf League Challenger Series events. Outside of Hawaii it is without a doubt the best locations on tour and the best attended event by all the Championship Tour surfers. It is Africa's Major in turn of the Qualification Tour and with exception of one of the 13 years, every single surfer has gone onto qualify for the Championship Tour in the following year. This shows the importance of this event on the world surfing stage.”

“As the governing body of the sport of surfing, Surfing South Africa (SSA), shares the same sentiments as WSL and KDM and we will continue to support and work alongside all role players and stakeholders through this process. We wish all athletes across the country and around the globe a safe return to competitive surfing in 2021 in good health,” said Bongani Xulu, Deputy Chair of SSA Board of Executives.

The Ballito Pro Presented by O’Neill forms part of the new WSL Challenger Series, a newly designed format that is the ultimate battleground for surfers to showcase their talents and qualify for the elite WSL Championship Tour. We extend our appreciation and support to our partners, athletes, local business and the broader community, at this time and will update with more details as they arise.