

# Bendigo to host beach volleyball spectacular

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BENDIGO might be 150 kilometres from the beach, but that won't stop the world's best beach volleyball players hitting the sand in the middle of town.

Tonnes of sand will be delivered to Williamson Street near the Lansell Gardens, where beach volleyball courts will be set up for the Virgin Blue Regional Series, which is set to attract Olympians, world champions and top juniors.

A 400-seat grandstand will surround the courts, which will provide spectators with the opportunity to witness the athleticism and excitement of elite beach volleyball.

Vic Beach operations director Greg Jury said this was the first regional beach volleyball tournament of its kind.

"We've never put up a court in the middle of a town square before," he said.

"We've had festivals, but we have never brought an event to a town and made it our own."

Players from all over Australia have entered the tournament, including three-time Olympian Josh Slack, world champion Brett Richardson, and local heroes Peter 'Chico' Jones and Karley Hines.

Jones, who grew up in Bendigo, also played a role in bringing the tournament to his home town.

He said it was a great opportunity to develop local talent.

"When the opportunity arose it was perfect because we wanted to get out of the city and start putting something back into the regional community," he said.

"From an old Bendigo person, it feels really good to be able to put a tournament like this in town and input the pathway for young players."

City of Greater Bendigo councillor James Reade said the event would be something different for the town.

“It is a bit ironic that Bendigo is having a beach volleyball competition because we are so far inland, but it just shows how great and diverse our town is,” Cr Reade said.

“It’s putting Bendigo on the map.”

The Virgin Blue Regional Series will run from December 11 to 13 in Bendigo before travelling to Geelong, Frankston and Moamma in the new year.



LEAP: Cedric Legrend smashes the ball as Rhiannon Watt and Karley Hynes look at yesterday's tournament launch at Lansell Gardens. Picture: BILL CONROY