



The 2015 Shanghai Rolex Masters will be held from Oct 10-18 in Shanghai. ROLEX/GIANNI CIACCIA

Rolex, a balance between tradition and innovation

By ZHUANTI

Rolex is proud to be a major force behind the finest events, players and organizations in tennis. From Wimbledon and the Australian Open to Swiss phenomenon Roger Federer, Rolex has forged a strong relationship with this great sport.

History

The roots of Rolex's affinity for sports and human achievement can be traced back to the origins of the company. When founder Hans Wilsdorf set up his watchmaking firm, he was influenced by the swift changes sweeping through society at the beginning of the 20th century. In an era when wristwatches were still regarded as fragile items of apparel, he was determined to create a wristwatch that would be robust, precise and reliable. He believed it should adapt to the ever more active lifestyles.

In 1910, a Rolex wristwatch obtained the first certificate granted by the Official Watch Rating Center in Bienne, Switzerland.

In 1926, Rolex invented the Rolex Oyster, the first waterproof wristwatch, thanks to a case equipped with an ingenious patented system consisting of a screw-down bezel, case back and winding crown. To promote his invention, Wilsdorf equipped Mercedes Gleitze with an oyster when she swam the English



Swiss tennis super star Roger Federer ROLEX/GIANNI CIACCIA

Channel a year later. The Rolex watch emerged from more than 10 hours in the water in perfect working condition, and the young Englishwoman effectively became the brand's first spokesperson for the watch.

In 1931, Rolex invented the first wristwatch self-winding system with a free rotor, called the Perpetual rotor, the precursor of contemporary self-winding systems.

With Wilsdorf at the helm, Rolex continued to demonstrate time and again the watches' reliability in the most extreme conditions, on land, in the air,

in the depths of the ocean or on the tallest peaks. By being associated with so many achievements, Rolex became the trusted reference for chronometric precision, robustness and reliability around the world. Meanwhile, Rolex evolved, as did its product, in a constant pursuit of perfection. As part of this, Rolex watches, made from only the highest quality materials and designed by the industry's best, became symbols of elegance and prestige. Rolex then began seeking out activities that, like itself, were motivated by passion, excellence and precision. Naturally, Rolex

gravitated toward tennis, forming an alliance that dates back to the late 1970s when the brand became the official timekeeper of Wimbledon.

Wimbledon

Rolex values its long-standing partnership with Wimbledon, the world's first lawn tennis championship, initially held at the All England Club in July 1877. The oldest and most prestigious tennis tournament in the world, Wimbledon has succeeded in making significant improvements to its grounds as well as the sport, while preserving its unique image and character. This perfect balance between tradition and innovation is similar to the evolution of Rolex's Oyster Perpetual and has formed the basis for a lasting alliance between two entities.

The Australian Open

Associate sponsor and official timekeeper of the Australian Open, Rolex is proud of its link with this major tournament, dubbed by Rolex spokesman and four-time Australian Open champion Roger Federer as the "happy slam". The first of the four annual Grand Slam tournaments, it attracts large numbers of tennis enthusiasts who gather to watch the world's best players compete in Australia's summer heat.

Further Involvement

Rolex is also the official

timekeeper of the Association of Tennis Professionals World Tour and its championship, the ATP World Tour Finals, as well as the official timekeeper of the WTA Championships. The ATP World Tour Finals and the WTA Championships bring together the top eight male and female singles players and doubles teams at different venues each year for an end-of-season tournament. Glamour abounds at the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters every April when the leading players compete for an ATP World Tour Masters 1000 title on clay courts overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

In Shanghai, Rolex is very proud to be the title sponsor of the Shanghai Rolex Masters. Inaugurated in 2009, it is considered the best tennis event for men in Asia. In its first five years, it was designated Masters 1000 of the Year by ATP players.

In addition to these, Rolex is associated with other Masters 1000 competitions, including the Mutua Madrid Open, the Internazionali BNL d'Italia in Rome, the Rogers Cup in Canada, the BNP Paribas Masters in Paris and the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, California.

Of the Masters 500 tournaments on the ATP World Tour, Rolex is proud to be associated with the China Open in Beijing, the Dubai Tennis Championship and the Rio Open in Rio de Janeiro. Rolex also participates in the development of tennis through its support of the Davis Cup, organized by the International Tennis Federation, and the annual Hall of Fame Tennis Championships, played on grass in Newport, Rhode Island, where great players are inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Past Rolex Testimonees Rod Laver, Bjorn Borg and Chris Evert were honored in 1981, 1987 and 1995, respectively.

Testimonees

In further patronage of tennis' exceptional individuals, Rolex counts Federer among its trusted advocates. Federer held the No 1 position in men's tennis for more than 300 weeks — a record — and is the winner of an unsurpassed 17 Grand Slam victories, one Davis Cup title (in 2014) and a silver medal at the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Like a Rolex watch, tennis requires absolute precision and consistency, and Federer, who has been associated with the brand since 2001, has mastered the game better than any other player in history. The men who play against him are the first to attest to his undeniable skill.

Rolex also stands behind Belinda Bencic (Switzerland), Grigor Dimitrov (Bulgaria), Ana Ivanovic (Serbia), Li Na (China), Juan Martin del Potro (Argentina), Milos Raonic (Canada), Sloane Stephens (United States), Jo-Wilfried Tsonga (France), Eugenie Bouchard (Canada) and Caroline Wozniacki (Denmark).

Shanghai Rolex Masters rides new wave of enthusiasm for the game

By ZHANG KUN

The Shanghai Rolex Masters has accelerated the popularity of the sport among the people of Shanghai.

Tennis seems to have developed in China faster than virtually anywhere else on the global scene, said Li Yao, vice-director of the Shanghai Tennis Association.

Every year, between September and October, the world's top players fly to Asia for the China Open tournament in Beijing or the Tokyo Open in Japan, before meeting in Shanghai for the climax of the Asian season, at the Shanghai Rolex Masters.

The Shanghai Rolex Masters is chronologically the eighth out of nine ATP World Tour Masters 1000 tournaments on the Association of the Tennis Professionals World Tour season, and is the only one played outside of Europe and North America.

For five years in a row, from 2009 to 2013, the Shanghai Rolex Masters was voted the best tournament. "Our ambition now is to win the title back," said Patrick Yang, the vice-general manager of Shanghai Juss Event Management Co Ltd, the tournament organizer.

Shanghai hosted the first international professional tennis tournament in China in 1998. It was a bold move for Juss, a new company dedicated to the game, which paid the handsome amount of \$1.25 million for the right to host the Heineken Open, a 250-point tournament. "Shanghai had no more than 10,000 tennis players at that time," Yang said. "But a consumers' survey showed that tennis was the first choice that sports enthusiasts were ready to take up."

Star athletes of the time, such as Andre Agassi and Michael Chang, all played the Heineken Open in Shanghai.

The success encouraged Juss to host the ATP Final of 2002, when the eight top-ranking athletes competed in Shanghai.

It was also the time when Shanghai applied to host the World Expo 2010, and the tournament successfully drew lots of positive attention to the city.

Shanghai went on to hold the ATP Final from 2005-08. Public interest in the game grew significantly during this time. A survey in 2005 showed 540,000 people were playing tennis regularly in Shanghai, Yang said. "In 2012, the number grew to nearly 1 million."

The Shanghai Rolex Masters started in 2009. "We are still the one and only ATP Masters 1000



Milos Raonic hammers a forehand during a Rolex event. ROLEX/GIANNI CACCIA

tournament in Asia," Yang said. Every year, between September and October, the Asian leg of the ATP World Tour consists of three tournaments: the China Open in Beijing and the Tokyo Open in Japan are ATP World Tour 500 series, and Shanghai is a Masters 1000 event."

There are altogether nine tournaments in the Masters 1000

series around the world every year; they are the second-most important events behind the four Grand Slam tournaments: the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open.

The China Open in Beijing has grown rapidly over the past few years, mainly because of its importance in the women's tournament, especially as China has

produced a few highly successful women players over the past few years.

"Stars play such an important role in the promotion of tennis," Li Na said. Whenever Li, the first Chinese woman tennis player to win a Grand Slam, played in a tournament, the TV ratings would surge.

"In the short period after Li

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We still have a long way to catch up: Our management system, coaches training, and national tournaments... all need to improve, and these are the framework that guarantees the production of good athletes.”

Li Yao, vice-director of the Shanghai Tennis Association

Na's retirement, the public's interest for tennis in China surely has cooled down a little bit," Yang said, "but in the long run, the trend is still going strong."

Professional tennis is new to China. Traditionally, athletes are selected at a very young age and start systematic training in sports schools. The funding is sponsored by the state, and is known as the national strategy in training top athletes and Olympic champions. Now with the sport's strong marketing development here, corporations are beginning to invest in tennis.

Shanghai's municipal professional tennis team was founded in this context and has about 30 players now. Wu Di, the most acclaimed of them, has won several national championships and is now competing in international tournaments.

Half of the universities and colleges in Shanghai have tennis clubs or provide tennis class in their sports curriculum, Li said. Every year hundreds of tournaments take place all over the country.

Many parents in China, inspired by Li, have sent their children to get trained in the game. The Internet also played an important part, bringing together people who also want to play the game. "There are no less than 100 tennis clubs in Shanghai, and the most popular of them have up to 1,000 members," Li said.

The popularity of tennis among the public doesn't immediately lead to good performances on the circuit. "We still have a long way to catch up: Our management system, coaches training and national tournaments... all need to improve, these things will provide the framework that guarantees the production of good athletes," Li said.