

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Sony Ericsson WTA Tour Launches Asia Pacific Office Operations In Beijing

- Tour's office in Beijing, China marks significant step in the expansion of women's tennis into the Asia-Pacific Region; complements Tour's decision to award Beijing major 9-day event featuring world's best players and equal prize money beginning in 2009 as part of Tour's Roadmap plan

BEIJING, China – The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour has opened its Asia-Pacific headquarters in Beijing, China, the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour announced today. This office becomes the third global office of professional women's tennis, adding to the Tour's main headquarters in St. Petersburg, Florida, USA and the European office in London, UK.

The Tour's office operations in the Asia Pacific region will be located in the Beijing Central Business District in the Vantone Center. David Shoemaker, who has been the Tour's Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel, has relocated from the Tour's office in Florida to assume the role of Head of Asia Pacific. Shoemaker will be responsible for defining the strategy for women's tennis in Asia Pacific, growing the Tour's presence in the region as well as assuming overall leadership of all Asia Pacific staff. He will maintain his role as General Counsel as well as other executive responsibilities for the Tour.

Kirsten Fisher, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Asia Pacific, also transferred from Florida and will spearhead the development of marketing and media activities in the Asia-Pacific region and will direct the enhancement of China's grassroots and promotional initiatives. An additional eight regional staff members will be hired in the near future, assigned to the areas of marketing, communications, events and administration.

Sony Ericsson WTA Tour Chief Operating Office and General Counsel, David Shoemaker, remarked on his new post: "I'm extremely excited to lead the Tour's operations in China and eager to see women's tennis reach its full potential in the region. Combining one of the most significant events on Tour with the stars of women's tennis along with the involvement of the Beijing government, the China Tennis Association and the Beijing Municipal Government, we have all the keys for success."

The initiative to open an office in China is part of the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour's effort to grow and develop women's tennis in China and across Asia. As part of the Tour's 2009 Roadmap circuit structure plan, the city of Beijing has been awarded one of four prestigious events that will anchor a new streamlined calendar in 2009. This event will be a nine-day tennis tournament featuring prize money of at least US\$4 million and equal to that of the men's ATP Masters Series event in Shanghai. The event will be mandatory for all players who qualify by ranking and thus see the best women's tennis fields to ever compete in China.

Building on the flourishing partnership with Beijing, the Asia-Pacific office will serve as the hub of a major marketing and promotional initiative to grow women's tennis in China and the Asia-Pacific, one of the world's largest and most dynamic markets and regions. Several initiatives will support this goal including customizing the Tour's new global marketing campaign, creating regional media partnerships, developing a Chinese language website and supporting national grassroots development programs. The Tour will work closely with the China Open Limited (a wholly owned subsidiary of the Beijing Youth Daily), the China Tennis Association and the Beijing Municipal Government.

Mr. Zhang Yabin, Chairman of China Open Promotions Limited, stated, "China Open has been working with the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour for over four years. The new office, in addition to the 2009 upgraded China Open, shows the partnership growing to a higher, more influential level and truly building into a long-term relationship."

The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour is the world's largest premier professional sport for women with more than 2,000 players representing 90 nations competing for \$70.8 million in prize money at the Tour's 60 events in 34 countries. More than 4.7 million people attended women's tennis events in 2007 with millions more watching events on television networks around the world. The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour season concludes with the Sony Ericsson Championships – Doha 2008 in Doha, Qatar, November 4-9, 2008. Further information on the Tour can be found on the Internet at www.sonyericssonwtatour.com.



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The Director of the Beijing Sports Bureau, Mr. Sun Kanglin, added, "On behalf of the Beijing Sports Bureau, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to the Tour for its Asia Pacific office here in Beijing. After the Olympic Games, the utilization of all stadiums and manpower will become a long-term strategy to grow Beijing as a center of sports, with tennis becoming a core strategy for this city. The partnership between the Tour, Beijing Municipal Government and Beijing Sports Society creates a great foundation to extend to wider audiences as we work together to develop tennis in Beijing and all of China."

The Vice President of Sony Ericsson and the Director of Sony Ericsson China, Mr. Lu Jian explained, "We view China as one of the key markets and as title sponsor of the WTA Tour, Sony Ericsson hopes the opening of the Asia Pacific office in Beijing will push the development of tennis in China. The spirit of the Tour dedicated to tennis development is in line with our dynamic and creative brand image of Sony Ericsson."

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