



PRESS RELEASE
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BUMPER WORLD CLASS ENTRY FOR 20TH ANNIVERSARY BRITISH OPEN WHEELCHAIR TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

PART OF THE NEC WHEELCHAIR TENNIS TOUR - ITF SUPER SERIES STATUS - SANCTIONED BY THE ITF

The British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships, part of the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour, gets underway on Monday, 20th July, boasting a bumper entry of 176 players, to begin two weeks of top class international wheelchair tennis at the City of Nottingham Tennis Centre.

One of the world's leading wheelchair tennis tournaments and one of just three Super Series events on the 2009 NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour, the 20th British Open has arguably the highest quality entry in the history of the event, which has been held in Nottingham for the past 17 years. Every world top 10 player in each of the men's, women's and quad singles events is due to be in Nottingham this year, headed by defending British Open champions, Beijing Paralympic gold medallists and world No 1 players Shingo Kunieda of Japan, Esther Vergeer of the Netherlands and Britain's Peter Norfolk.

Kunieda heads the seeds for the men's main draw singles as he bids for his third British Open title and he arrives in Nottingham unbeaten in 65 singles matches in the last two seasons since losing his last match of 2007. One of two Japanese players in the top 10, Kunieda is likely to have his strongest opposition from French, Dutch and Swedish players, with French duo Stephan Houdet and Michael Jeremiasz, winners of the recent Men's Wheelchair Doubles at Wimbledon, both bidding for their first British Open men's singles titles.

Apart from Kunieda, the only other previous champion in the men's field is Robin Ammerlaan of the Netherlands, who is bidding for a third British Open title after wins in both 2003 and 2006. Beijing Paralympic silver medallist Ammerlaan heads a trio of world top 10 ranked Dutch players that includes Maikel Scheffers and Ronald Vink, while Sweden's reigning NEC Wheelchair Tennis Singles Masters champion Stefan Olsson is likely to be another strong contender.

Among those leading the British challenge will be Scotland's British No 1 Gordon Reid along with Nottinghamshire's own David Phillipson and Middlesex's Marc McCarroll. Currently British No 2 and reigning National men's doubles champion, Bingham 20-year-old Phillipson is currently world ranked No 36 and aims to progress beyond the first round of the men's main draw singles for the second time in three years.

The incomparable Vergeer heads a group of five Dutch players in the world's top seven in the women's singles. Vergeer comes to Nottingham with arguably the longest current winning streak in world sport, having been unbeaten in 360 matches since the end of January 2003, while her last singles loss in Nottingham came in the 2000 final. The three-time Paralympic women's singles champion bids for her ninth successive British Open title, her strongest challenges likely to come from her fellow countrywomen Korie Homan, Jiske Griffioen and Sharon Walraven as well as French world No 3 Florence Gravelier. Homan is the only player to have had a match point against Vergeer since January 2003, the match point coming in the women's singles final at the Beijing Paralympics.

Wimbledon Women's Wheelchair Doubles finalist Lucy Shuker leads the British challenge in the women's singles, the Somerset-based British No 1 and world No 8 carrying the main domestic hopes along with Warwickshire's Jordanne Whiley, currently the world No 1 ranked junior girl's player.

Whiley is one of two Britons with world No 1 rankings going on to this year's British Open, the other being Hampshire's two-time Paralympic quad singles gold medallist Norfolk, who bids for a fifth British Open title this year.

Norfolk is one of four former British Open quad champions in this year's field, along with his biggest rival, world No 2 David Wagner of the United States, Bas Van Erp of the Netherlands and Israel's Shraga Weinberg. All three could pose live threats to Norfolk's title defence, while Beijing Paralympic silver medallist Johan Andersson and American Nick Taylor will also be strong challengers.

Merseyside's world No 8 Jamie Burdekin, who partnered Norfolk to win bronze in the quad doubles at last September's Beijing Paralympics, and Middlesex's Andrew Laphorne should also be challenging for major honours, both Britons having enjoyed wins over world top 10 opposition already this season.

The 20th British Open is supported by Nottingham City Council, Slazenger, Grandstand Seating, Highland Spring, Owen Brown and Audi, as well as the Tennis Foundation and the National Wheelchair Tennis Association of Great Britain (NWTAG).

The 20th British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships begins on Monday, 20th July, with the finals on Friday 24th and Saturday, 25th July. Entry is FREE to all spectators throughout the tournament.

Following the British Open, the 25th Invacare World Team Cup, the Davis and Fed Cups of wheelchair tennis, begins at the City of Nottingham Tennis Centre on Monday, 27th July.

For all media enquiries about the 20th British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships, please contact Marshall Thomas, Press Officer, on 0151 608 0316 or 07880 641 855 or email Marshall.Thomas@btinternet.com.

For further information about the British Open, please contact Becky Drew, Tournament Director, on 07971 141 301 Becky.Drew@tennisfoundation.org.uk.

Website: <http://www.tennisfoundation.org.uk/disabilitytennis/British-Open-2009/>

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour originated in 1992 with 11 international tournaments. It has grown into a tour comprising of 150 events in approximately 30 countries around the world. The NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour concludes with the most prestigious event, the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Masters, a year-end world championship for the top 8 men and top 8 women players. The NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour is divided into Grand Slam, Super Series, ITF 1, 2 and 3 Series events and ITF Futures events.

With international rankings and prize money, the sport has clearly elevated itself to a more professional level. Tournaments offer various draws allowing all players a chance to compete at a competitive level. The No. 1 ranked male and female players at the end of the year are honoured as the Wheelchair Tennis World Champions during the ITF World Champions Dinner held at Roland Garros.

The primary goals of the **NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour** are to:

- Provide opportunities for thousands of people with physical disabilities to compete in professionally organised sporting events.
- Offer high intensity competition and excitement for men, women, quad and junior players from recreational to professional levels.
- Give wheelchair tennis players rightful recognition as top sport athletes.
- Increase awareness about people with disabilities throughout the world.
- Create lifetime opportunities for athletes to enjoy and practice a sport with able-bodied and disabled opponents.

For more details about the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour, please refer to site:

<http://www.itftennis.com/wheelchair/tournaments/aboutnecour.asp>

For the latest world rankings (the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Ranking), please refer to:

<http://www.itftennis.com/wheelchair/rankings/index.asp>

