



PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE USE: Tuesday, 21st July 2009

GRAVELLIER EDGES PAST SEVENANS AT RAIN HIT BRITISH OPEN WHEELCHAIR TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

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

After Frenchman Nicolas Peifer became the first seed to exit the 20th British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships, part of the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour, late on Monday night, his compatriot Florence Gravellier narrowly escaped following suit as Tuesday's match of the day at the City of Nottingham Tennis Centre saw the world No 3 edge through her opening women's singles match against Belgian world No 8 Annick Sevenans in three sets.

After weather conditions forced the majority of the second day's matches indoors, Sevenans made a sensational start against Gravellier, but was unable to sustain her level in the second set as Gravellier forced a decider. Sevenans double-faulted on break point in the eight game of the final set, allowing Gravellier to level the contest and the Belgian then had three game points to try and force a final set tie-break. However, Gravellier dug deep and finally grasped a 1-6, 6-3, 7-5 victory.

"It was not pretty, but I am glad to have won," said Gravellier. "After waiting all day to play because of the conditions it was one of those matches that was difficult and I just had to get through it the best I could."

Gravellier now goes on to play seventh seed Aniek van Koot of the Netherlands in the last eight after van Koot overcame Chile's Francisca Mardones.

With the seeded players in the women's singles all beginning their challenges on Tuesday, world No 1 Esther Vergeer of the Netherlands opened her bid for a ninth British Open title by easing past British No 1 and world No 10 Lucy Shuker. Vergeer recorded a 6-0, 6-1 victory that extends her winning streak to 361 matches, one of the longest winning streaks in world sport. Her latest win sets up an intriguing quarter-final against Australian world No 6 Daniela di Toro, who was the last player to beat Vergeer on 30 January 2003 in Sydney, Australia. Like Vergeer, di Toro also dropped just one game in the second set of her match against her compatriot Janel Manns.

Meanwhile, Warwickshire's British No 2 Jordanne Whiley was unable to build upon a 3-0 second set lead in her second round match against Dutch world No 5 Jiske Griffioen, who eventually went on to progress 6-2, 6-4.

Elsewhere, there were few surprises as the main protagonists eased through in the men's main draw singles, women's singles and quad singles.

Colombia's Eliecer Oquendo, who recently took part in the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Development Team training at the National Tennis Centre in Roehampton, London, proved he is an ever-improving player on the wheelchair tennis circuit as he took six games off world No. 3 and three-time British Open champion Robin Ammerlaan of the Netherlands, but Ammerlaan still progressed 6-3, 6-3 to earn an enticing second round match against Japan's world No. 9 Satoshi Saida.

Ammerlaan was one of two Dutchmen to progress to the second round of the men's main draw on Tuesday, the other being fifth seed Maikel Scheffers, while Swedish duo Stefan Olsson and Peter Wikstrom also eased through. However, the easiest victory of the day in the men's main draw belonged to Austrian seventh seed Martin Legner, who beat Chile's Robinson Mendez 6-0, 6-0.

Tuesday's second day of play also saw the last four remaining first round matches completed in the quad singles, Britain's Adam Field and Danny Robbins joining Dutch player Dorrie Timmermans and Israel's Boaz Kramer in the last 16. Field beat Canada's Adrian Dieleman 6-1, 6-2 and goes on to face fellow Briton and world No 8 Jamie Burdekin in the only all-British second round contest. Meanwhile after a first round bye, Hampshire's world No 1 ranked quad player and reigning British Open champion Peter Norfolk is set to begin his title defence against Italy's Antonio Raffaele.

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 a bumper entry of 176 players and arguably the highest quality entry in the history of the event, which has been held in Nottingham for the past 17 years.

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 continues until the weekend, 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 0115 922 7850 or 07880 641 855 or email Marshall.Thomas@btinternet.com.

For any further enquiries about the British Open, please contact the Tournament Office, on 0115 922 8360 or Becky Drew, Tournament Director, on 07971 141 301 or email 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/aboutnectour.asp>

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

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

