



Tennis – Alive and Well! More than 1500 children attend the Völkl / Disney Kick-Off Event at the Hamburg "Rothenbaum"

LIGHT-RIGHT™ racquets, Mickey Mouse and John McEnroe impress the kids in Hamburg, Germany

Munich, 14. May 2003 – Some would say that tennis in Germany doesn't have a future – this is simply not true! With the astounding success witnessed at the initial launch of the "Tennis Academy Mickey", (presented by Völkl Tennis and The Walt Disney Company) last week in Hamburg, this pessimistic statement no longer has any valid merit.

More than 1500 children were invited to participate in this new event that was held prior to the start of the ATP Masters Series event scheduled at the "Rothenbaum". This unique event allowed children to experience the sheer fun and excitement of the sport of tennis. The event lasted well into the evening allowing each and every willing child the opportunity to experience and participate in the exciting new world of "Tennis Academy Mickey".

LIGHT-RIGHT™ racquets and new special balls that were specially developed for children by Völkl and Disney fascinated the young children just as much as Disney's very own characters Mickey and Goofy who were flown in especially from Disneyland Paris. Numerous action areas, including several mini tennis courts, a show stage and various other attractions drew the attention of every child in attendance and provided them with an unforgettable experience.

The absolute highlight of the day came when tennis legend John McEnroe personally joined in the fun. McEnroe energetically supported this mutual endeavour of Völkl tennis and Disney with his on-court personalized sprit – as only McEnroe can do! Surrounded by hundreds of enthusiastic children John McEnroe answered numerous questions asked by the youngsters, and playfully joked with them about many topics.

Then the former world's #1 tennis player grabbed a "Mickey" racquet for himself, took up the challenge offered by the children, and competed in a training match with them.



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The total enjoyment and delight showed in the eyes and faces of each and every child. The largest gathering of the more than 5,000 visitors was found around the many mini-courts. The children, who came from many of Hamburg's local nursery and pre-school's, held a tennis racquet in their hands for the first time ever. Those who witnessed the event, have no doubts that these kids will want to actively continue playing tennis - thanks to the "Tennis Academy Mickey"!

Equipped with the new child-friendly "Mickey" racquets designed by Völkl and Disney, they discovered new talents and the sheer fun of tennis. The achievement of playing long rallies could be enjoyed even by absolute beginners - the watching parents and attendants were as amazed as the kids as to how easy it was to be introduced to a sport that up until now, was viewed as being difficult to learn.

When Völkl Tennis and the Walt Disney Company sat down together at the beginning of the year they were determined to make their mutual goal of this alliance one that focused on making the sport of tennis something that can be fun, simple to learn, and a positive influence on the young lives of today's children - an influence that would continue with them throughout their adult lives. Surely without this mutual cooperation and aggressive attitude taken by Völkl Tennis and Disney, many of today's children would never have had the chance to be introduced to tennis - let alone in a way that promotes the game in such a positive and fun way.

"We were extremely conscious of the fact that after years of stagnation, there was an urgent need for a new direction, in particular with regard to equipment. With that in mind, together with Disney, Völkl Tennis developed a series of ultra-light racquets (LIGHT-RIGHT) as well as specifically designed balls to match. This special combination allows children between the ages of three and nine years to learn tennis for the first time using optimum and child-friendly equipment. In order to increase the fun-factor for tennis kids even further, we have produced the racquets and balls using a fresh new Mickey Mouse design. After the overwhelming success we received from the kick-off event recently held in Hamburg, we are firmly convinced that Völkl Tennis and Disney have taken the correct approach in properly laying the foundation the sport so desperately needed to gain new enthusiasm for tennis among today's children." As was stated a very satisfied Mr. Udo Münster, Managing Director of Völkl Tennis GmbH.

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Thomas Lang, Marketing Director of Walt Disney International, was equally impressed with the initial results of this newly formed and unique alliance with Völkl Tennis: "The kick-off event in Hamburg was a mirror image of what we had hoped for - it couldn't have been any better! We had hoped our partnership with Völkl Tennis would soon have a positive impact on children and their parents, but to see this result happen already in the very first event ever... simply showed that the combination of 'Disney-Magic' and 'Völkl Tennis know-how' is the perfect combination. We have already made the impact today on tennis for children that we had honestly thought was still many months away. As it has always been a tradition at Disney to bring things of tomorrow to children today, combine that philosophy to Völkl Tennis' rich heritage of being a leader in tennis product design, and the result has been that this new program has already become a #1 hit with the children!"

The new children's racquets and balls from Völkl tennis and Disney are being launched via specialist retailers in July 2003. There will be three (3) different racquet lengths as well as a "starter-kit "consisting of racquets, balls and a special bag.

At beginning of next year Völkl Tennis along with Walt Disney, will introduce the next phase of their project. Under the exciting title of: "Tennis Academy Mickey". Both partners will initially introduce this program in Europe, and together with selected tennis schools and coaches, introduce a new specific training / coaching program that will focus entirely on making tennis fun and easy to learn for today's children.

For further questions, or additional pictures / media releases please contact:

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