



# South African Wheelchair Tennis

**Wheelchair Tennis South Africa (WTSA) is hard at work preparing for two upcoming tournaments where it will be hosting a variety of nations on South African soil. Players from Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe will arrive in the country to compete at the Airports Company South Africa Open and the Airports Company South Africa Benoni Open.**

## **Airports Company South Africa Open**

The Airports Company South Africa Open will be staged between 21 - 25 April, and is a Grade One event – the highest grading of any event held in the country. The five-day tournament will be held at Ellis Park Tennis Stadium in Johannesburg, where games will be staged between 09h00 and 15h00 daily. With easy access for wheelchairs, the public is encouraged to enjoy a fun day out supporting the Green and Gold players.

WTSA director, Holger Losch said, "This tournament is one of the last opportunities for players to compete in a high grade event and gain points to qualify for the Paralympics. International players will travel to South Africa with that one goal in mind. The entries are still streaming in, and if this trend continues, the draws will be full, and will make this the largest international event that WTSA has hosted to date besides the World Team Cup in 2011. The tournament has attracted the highest calibre players from around the world and we're looking forward to some excellent tennis."

WTSA's aim is to upgrade the tournament from a Grade One event to a Super Series in the near future - a Super Series is equivalent to a Grand Slam in able-body tennis terms. "There are currently only six Super Series held in the world and for South Africa to host one of them would be an honour for WTSA," added Losch

Some exciting internationally ranked names to watch for in the women's division at the South African Open include, Marjolein Buis (No. 4) from the Netherlands, Sabine Ellerbrock (No.5) from Germany, Sharon Walraven (No.7) also from the Netherlands, and Katharina Kruger (No.11), another German player. South Africa's top woman, Kgothatso Montjane is in great condition and currently holds the No.10 position worldwide; a ranking to be proud of. She hopes to reach No.8 before the Paralympics which will elevate her to seeded player status. Being seeded can make a world of difference in tournament play as it means she can't draw the top seed and get knocked out in the first round. SA's No.1 quad, Lucas Sithole, now positioned No.10 internationally, is striving to achieve the same goal.

In the quad's division, Canadian Sarah Hunter (No.16) and Brit, Andrew Laphorne (No.4) will compete against Sithole and his counterparts, Steven Kekai and newcomer, Bongani Dlamini.

The men's division includes an extremely competitive field of athletes with Gordon Reid, (No.13) from the United Kingdom and Japanese player Yoshinobu Fujimoto (No.18) vying for the title. All eyes will be on South Africa's No.2 player, Evans Maripa who will need to perform incredibly well to qualify for the Paralympics. He has about 10 positions to make up for his Olympic dream to come true. "It is attainable if Evans applies himself and does well. We have faith in him and are supporting him all the way," said Losch.

## **Airports Company South Africa Benoni Open**

The annual Airports Company South Africa Benoni Open will be held from 27 April – 01 May at the Gauteng East Tennis Stadium, in Benoni. This also looks to be a bumper event as almost all the athletes competing in the Airports Company South Africa Open will participate in this event too. This is a Grade Two event and caters for men's, women's, quads, and a juniors division.