



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **ITF APPOINTS WHEELCHAIR TENNIS AMBASSADORS**

The ITF has announced the selection of the following six ITF Wheelchair Tennis Ambassadors to assist with its promotion of wheelchair tennis worldwide:

Jonas Bjorkman (SWE)  
Sven Groeneveld (NED)  
David Hall (AUS)  
Monique Kalkman (NED)  
Brad Parks (USA)  
Tommy Robredo (ESP)

The new ITF panel of ambassadors is a combination of former wheelchair tennis players and high profile personalities within tennis who have shown a strong interest in the sport.

Since wheelchair tennis became a fully integrated part of the ITF in 1997, it has become one of the fastest growing Paralympic sports and is currently played in more than 100 countries. The NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour, organised by the ITF, currently consists of 160 tournaments in more than 40 countries offering over \$1 million in prize money. The tour includes wheelchair tennis events at all four Grand Slam tournaments.

The ambassadors will make themselves available to engage with the media in their own countries or at key events, such as the Grand Slams, to assist with the promotion of the sport, which has a rapidly growing international fan base.

“For many years the ITF has sought to develop closer links between wheelchair tennis and the wider tennis community in order to promote the sport and ultimately expand the base of players of all ages and abilities around the world,” said Mark Bullock, ITF Wheelchair Tennis Manager.

“The announcement of our six ambassadors is an extension of the invaluable support wheelchair tennis has received from many key figures within the tennis family since its inception in 1976 and presents many exciting possibilities. We are extremely grateful for the support of our ambassadors and the key roles they will undoubtedly play in the continued growth and evolution of the sport.”

Former Davis Cup winner Tommy Robredo said: “I am delighted to be an ambassador for wheelchair tennis. I became the tournament director of an event in memory of my friend Santi Silvas, and have established a foundation specifically to promote the sport. I hope I can help raise the profile of this exciting part of tennis.”

Brad Parks, the founder of wheelchair tennis, said: “The sport of wheelchair tennis has been such an important part of my life and I am very pleased to be able to give back to the sport and the ITF. After my accident wheelchair tennis gave me back a sport that I could enjoy with able bodied friends and family, and then as the sport grew it gave me the opportunity to compete at the highest levels.”

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## **Biographies**

**Brad Parks** – Parks is the pioneering founder of wheelchair tennis. Injured during a freestyle skiing competition when he was 18, the American began experimenting with tennis as recreational therapy, and in 1976 wheelchair tennis was born. Parks and several other disabled athletes began playing and promoting wheelchair tennis in numerous exhibitions and clinics in the United States. The sport quickly grew as a result of this high exposure level, and in 1977 the first wheelchair tennis tournaments were held. Parks staged the first international wheelchair tennis event, the US Open, in Irvine, California. He was the Tournament Chairman for 18 years, setting the standard for others to follow. Parks recently became the first person associated with wheelchair tennis to be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

**Monique Kalkman** – Kalkman is the first and only female athlete to win Paralympic gold medals in two different individual sports. In 1984, the Dutch player became a Paralympic champion in table tennis before switching to wheelchair tennis in 1986. Between 1992 and 1996 Kalkman won three Paralympic gold medals, two NEC Masters singles titles and was four times ITF Wheelchair Tennis World Champion. After retiring, Kalkman became firstly an ambassador and then held a European management position with her former sponsor Sunrise Medical. She is now working as Business Development Manager and ambassador for Welzorg, which is the largest supplier of equipment for disabled people in Holland. Recently Kalkman has taken up a new sporting challenge by playing golf.

**Tommy Robredo** – Robredo is a professional tennis player from Spain who first broke into the world's top 10 in 2006. His highest singles ranking to date is No. 5, which he also reached in 2006, soon after winning the Hamburg Masters. Robredo's best finish in a Grand Slam is the quarterfinals, achieved four times at Roland Garros and once at the Australian Open. He has won nine singles titles on the ATP World Tour and has finished in the world's top 30 for nine years. Robredo represented Spain in the Davis Cup by BNP Paribas 13 times between 2002 and 2010 and was a part of three winning teams. He is the Tournament Director of an event on the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour in Olot and has a Foundation in his own name that exclusively supports wheelchair tennis.

**Sven Groeneveld** - Groeneveld has been a professional tennis coach to both players and coaches since 1991. The Dutchman has worked with some of the world's leading players, including Roger Federer, Nicolas Pietrangeli, Greg Rusedski, Monica Seles and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario. At the same time as his individual coaching, Groeneveld also headed up the coaching team for the Adidas player development programme, working with Ana Ivanovic and Fernando Verdasco among others. Since 2009, he has been working with Esther Vergeer, the current wheelchair tennis women's No. 1 and ten-time ITF World Champion. Vergeer is the first wheelchair tennis player he has coached. Alongside his tennis coaching, Groeneveld has also gained a Bachelor's degree in Business Management from Webster University, Leiden.

**David Hall** – Hall is arguably the sport's most decorated men's player. His accomplishments include winning eight Australian Opens, seven British Opens, eight US Opens and over 70 other tournaments, including 19 at Super Series level. Hall dominated the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour, ending the year as No. 1 and ITF World Champion on six occasions, most recently in 2004. He won the Paralympic men's singles gold medal in his home of Sydney in 2000 and helped Australia win the men's title at the World Team Cup, the ITF's flagship wheelchair tennis team event, on three occasions, with three different partners. Hall retired in 2006, but still maintains close links with the sport and continues to work with young wheelchair tennis players in his native Australia.

**Jonas Bjorkman** – Bjorkman has long been a supporter of wheelchair tennis in Sweden and was one of the ambassadors for the 2007 Invacare World Team Cup, the ITF's flagship wheelchair event, in Stockholm, Sweden. After turning professional in 1991, Bjorkman went on to reach a career high ranking of No. 4 in 1997, after reaching the semifinals of the US Open. He also excelled in doubles, reaching No. 1 on the world rankings and winning nine Grand Slam titles. He was named ITF doubles world champion with Todd Woodbridge in 2001. Bjorkman represented Sweden in Davis Cup for 14 years and played on three title-winning teams. He retired from professional tennis in 2008, having won a total of six singles titles and 54 doubles titles, and has since worked for a number of TV networks as an expert pundit.