

Shanghai Rolex Masters serves up top tennis talent to an eager fan base

The 2015 Shanghai Rolex Masters will be held in Shanghai from Oct 10 – 18. China Daily talked to Michael Andres Luévano, executive director of the international division at Shanghai Juss Event Management Co Ltd, the organizer, to discover more about the event.

Q: What has Juss learned organizing the Shanghai Rolex Masters over the past years?

A: The experience and expertise that Juss Events has gained by staging the Shanghai Rolex Masters has been tremendous. Staging one of the world's most prestigious and award winning men's ATP competitions has enabled us to build the strongest sports marketing and operations teams in China today. In the areas of sponsor acquisition, television, including digital, player services and fan-friendly atmosphere, we have no equal. Except of course, Formula 1, which we own as well!

Q: What achievements has Juss had over the past years?

A: There have been numerous achievements over the past few years, however, what we are very proud of is to have signed Rolex as our title sponsor of the event for a 10-year term beginning in 2016. This partnership is unprecedented on the ATP tour. We are also honored to have been voted by the ATP players as the Best Masters Event in the world five years in a row, from 2009 to 2013.

Q: What are the difficulties you have met during the events? And how have you overcome them?

A: There are always challenges when staging events on the scale of the Shanghai Rolex Masters. If I had to pick one of the challenges, I think it would have to be building a strong annual attendance. Tennis is still a growing sport here in China and we make building our fan base a daily priority. We set an attendance record last year of 152,000 people. In terms of finding the right solution, it's a combination of factors; focused marketing on specific groups, such as students or families; offering incentives, such as tennis coaching; and, of course, having the world's best players, like Rafa Nadal, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, compete in the tournament and play well.

Q: As the event director of the Shanghai Rolex Masters, what has impressed you most during the past years' events?



Michael Andres Luévano, executive director of the international division at Shanghai Juss Event Management Company PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

15-30 percent

annual growth rate of ticket sales

200 percent

increase of television broadcast hours since 2000

152,000 people

attended the tournament in 2014

A: This year I will celebrate 30 years of being a tournament director. This role allows me to be involved in all aspects of the tournament management and operations. What impresses me most is how passionate the Chinese tennis fans are. Every year I see fans camped out at the players' hotels and waiting at the airports just to see their favorites. The passion and loyalty is phenomenal in Shanghai.

Q: What do you expect to achieve during the 2015

Shanghai Rolex Masters?

A: Our goal for the 2015 tournament is to break last year's attendance record as well as offer the fans a more entertaining and interactive onsite experience.

Q: Are there any highlights to watch out for during this year's event?

A: We believe that the competition of the world's best is the highlight. What we call "Super Wednesday" is always special because all the top seeded players play their matches on that day. We also love to have the spectators come to the first Saturday, Oct 10, for "Kids Day". It is free entrance and lots of activities for the family.

Q: Industry insiders say tennis culture has gradually grown in the country with an increasing number of tennis events held in China, would you agree?

A: This is certainly an accurate assessment. Currently there are three major ATP men's events, eight ATP Challenger events and eight WTA women's events in mainland China. This is tremendous growth fueled by the public's appreciation of the sport and the corporate and local government sectors investing

in the sport of tennis. We are in a unique and enviable position in this market place.

Q: How do you see the current tennis market in China?

A: The current tennis market in China is very vibrant. As an example, the Shanghai Rolex Masters leads the world in major corporate partnerships. In our market research, tennis ranks No 1 as an inspirational sport for the public. Our ticket sales have an annual growth rate of between 15 to 30 percent. Our television broadcast hours have increased by 200 percent since 2000. This is thanks in part to great role models such as Li Na, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic.

Q: In your view, what is the major difference between tennis fans in China and those in other countries?

A: There is very little doubt in my mind that the Chinese tennis fans are some of the most passionate, vocal and loyal in the world of tennis!

Q: What has Juss done to help promote the spread of tennis culture across the country?

A: Juss Events has been in the professional tennis business in China since 1998 (then called Xinxin Sports). We were the first Chinese State-owned company to own an ATP franchise. We started WTA tennis in China in 2000. We were the first tournament to give Li Na a wild card into a main draw WTA event and we have started five Tennis Masters Cups and six Masters Series events. Our partnership with our sponsor, ANZ, brings grassroots tennis to thousands of kids every year. We are proud of our achievements, but also intend to do much more in the future. Our hope is that through our tournaments and commitment, we will see a future Chinese male ATP champion.

Q: What are your future plans in terms of organizing tennis events?

A: Our future plan is to become a bigger, perhaps a 10-day tournament. This would offer a larger draw size and the highest prize money for a Masters event. We strive to offer the Chinese and Asian tennis fans an annual event that is equal to any Grand Slam tournament.