
BNP Paribas and Tennis: Love Match

By Editor Test Tue, Jun 7, 2011

The French bank has sponsored the French Open for 38 years and in March launched a website called "We Are Tennis."

No financial services company loves tennis more than BNP Paribas, the 11th largest company in the world. Based in France, the global bank that has been a sponsor of the French Open since 1973, when the French tennis federation asked the bank to finance the construction of center court boxes at Roland Garros, the Open's home. Now the lead sponsor of the Open, BNP Paribas planned to spend about \$32 million promoting tennis in 2010, most of which goes to direct sponsorships rather than media purchases.

Last March, the bank created a website dedicated entirely to tennis and the bank's involvement in every level of international tennis, www.wearetennis.com. Besides showcasing BNP Paribas' sponsorship activities, the site offers tennis news, schedules, videos, expert blogs in French or English, and links to Facebook and Twitter

In one of its news releases, the BNP Paribas describes itself as having a presence in 80 countries, with more than 160,000 employees in Europe and another 40,000 abroad. Its three core activities are retail banking, investment solutions and corporate and investment banking. In the U.S., the bank owns BancWest Corp., holding company for Bank of the West.

Sebastien Guyader, BNP's executive in charge of branding and sponsorship, spoke with SportsDailyBusiness.com not long ago about the bank's large bet on one sport, albeit one with an "elite demographic." The bank likes tennis because it goes all year round, because it is played worldwide by universal rules, and because the bank's signage stays on-camera so much, because any single game in a match can last for awhile.

Despite all that, ironically, most people don't think of BNP Paribas when they think about tennis, except in the context of the French Open. A survey cited by SportsBusiness Daily showed that only one percent of tennis fans answered BNP Paribas to the question, "When you think about financial institutions involved in tennis, what companies come to mind?" Fourteen percent named Bank of America; Citi and JPMorgan Chase were named by seven percent each.

On the other hand, you can't underestimate the value of giving top international clients a chance to mingle with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. Especially if those clients, like millions of active, affluent and educated people, love tennis.