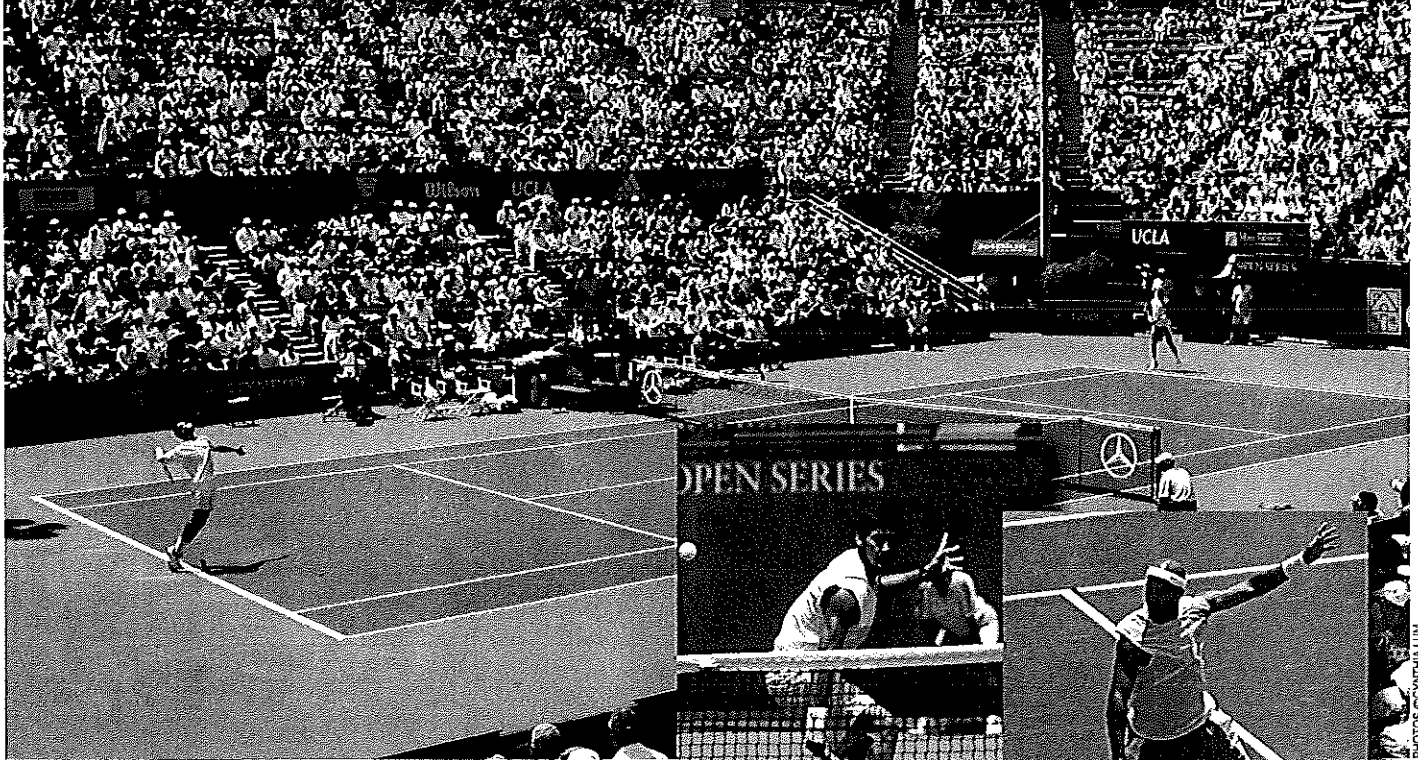


ROAD RAGE

The Olympus US Open Series Hits the Streets of North America

By Beth Rifkin



Players flying around the court like greased lightning, grunts reaching over 80 decibels and shots so superior that they send opponents crashing into walls: it must be the Olympus US Open Series. With six weeks, 10 events and \$30 million on the line, you can bet the pros will really be revving their engines.

The "Greatest Road Trip in Sports" started making tracks July 14 and runs through August 23 with the summer pro tennis season racing through North America to the ultimate finish line—the US Open. Six ATP tournaments, four WTA Sony Ericsson events, a Bonus Challenge worth an extra \$1 million, 200 hours of live television coverage and finals every Sunday launch pro tennis on an exciting path to the final Grand Slam of the year.

Now in its fifth year, the US Open Series, the creation of USTA's CEO Pro Tennis Arlen Kantarian, was originally perceived as unwise, to say the least. Alan Gold, General Manager for the US Open Series, explained, "When we came up with this idea five years ago, everyone thought we were crazy; but for a long time fans never knew where or what to watch, and the men's and women's tournaments would compete against each other for television time. So we created a centralized model. Now fans know there's a final on the same time every Sunday and viewership is up 130 percent."

This year, the hope is to raise those numbers even more using its signature marketing campaign, the "Greatest Road Trip in Sports," which consists of 13 different spots featuring more than 20 of the top men and women tennis players who encourage viewers to "Get on the [US Open Series] tour bus" and includes an actual three-month-long bus tour promoting the Series around the country at retail locations, festivals and other events in order to attract casual sports fans as well as tennis enthusiasts.

Additionally, the US Open Series has named Olympus as the first-ev-

er title sponsor. Gold said, "This is a great testament to what we have been able to do over the past four years. Olympus has been a long-time partner of the US Open and now having them as title sponsor is a great extension of a successful relationship."

New Haven's Pilot Penn Tennis tournament director, Anne Worcester, who has worked in both men's and women's professional tennis for more than 25 years, explained that there was always the hope that the Grand Slams would leverage their success to the rest of the professional tour, but the first time it actually happened was with the US Open Series. She said, "The national marketing campaign in high-end print publications; the attraction of blue chip sponsors, such as Evian, American Express, Valspar Paint, Mass Mutual Financial Group and Wolf Blass has been a dream come true."

Worcester continued, "The quantity and quality of TV coverage has benefited the players, the tournaments and most importantly, the fans. It's 'appointment TV'; just like the NFL and Nascar, tennis fans now know when and where to find broadcasts."

Donald Dell, director of the ATP Legg Mason Tennis Classic in Washington D.C., and a former U.S. Davis Cup captain, explained, "The Olympus US Open Series is the single most important thing the USTA has done in 50 years; it adds a lot of stability and exposure to the summer tournaments. There's been a rebirth of tennis in the United States and a lot of it has to do with that increased television exposure."

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Don't be left in the dust. For a complete broadcasting schedule of the Olympus US Open Series go to: www.usopenseries.com.