

Markus Günthardt and Anke Huber – successful dual Porsche Tennis Grand Prix tournament directors

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09/03/2023 A powerful pairing stands behind the success of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix as Markus Günthardt and Anke Huber have formed a successful tournament director duo ever since 2005. In an interview with Porsche Newsroom, the Tournament Director and the Operating Tournament Director talk about the continuing success of the world class event in the Porsche Arena, the feel-good factor for the players and the responsibility the star-studded tournament has for Germany's junior tennis players.

Anke, Markus, the first serve at the 46th Porsche Tennis Grand Prix will be sent down in five weeks' time. What can visitors particularly look forward to?

Anke Huber: "Tennis of the highest class, as always at the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix. Starting with Iga

Swiatek, the title holder and world No. 1, numerous top stars will be in action this year once again in the Porsche Arena. Fans are in store for extra suspense and excitement as Aryna Sabalenka, last year's runner-up and the reigning Australian Open champion, will be returning to Stuttgart."

Markus Günthardt: "And we've got other Top 10 players here too, like Caroline Garcia who won the 2022 WTA Finals, and Coco Gauff. The 18-year-old American is one of the young and successful players that stand for the future of women's tennis. We're also delighted that Emma Raducanu will be back competing in the Porsche Arena. As a Porsche Brand Ambassador, the 2021 US Open champion basically has a home game. As the entry deadline is at the end of March, we are reckoning on other Top 10 players adding their names to the list."

How do you manage to get virtually the whole Top 10 to appear in Stuttgart year in, year out? Anke Huber: "We look forward to every player that comes to us, no matter whether they are the number one or the number 50. I've built up a good personal contact with most of them over the years. I don't have to convince the players that have already been here about the quality of our tournament. They know exactly what they can expect. They know their way around and whenever they need something, they know who they can turn to. For them it's like coming back home. They keep telling us just how good they feel here. For us, it's the nicest compliment going."

Markus Günthardt: "A look at the list of stars that have confirmed their entries is for me proof that the total package we offer the players is spot on. We're not one of the really big tournaments, we don't have the biggest prize money and not the most world ranking points, but nevertheless the world's best players come to us. It's a fantastic statement telling us that they like being here."

Is that also perhaps down to them being able to win a fantastic sports car in Stuttgart as the main prize? Markus Günthardt: "Definitely. The winner's car has been a part of the tournament's tradition and DNA ever since the first Porsche Tennis Grand Prix in 1978. Awaiting the winner this year is a fully electric Porsche Taycan Turbo S Sport Turismo. All the top players would have no problems in buying a Porsche themselves, but that's not the point. The thing that makes the winner's car so desirable is the prospect that they can reward themselves for an exceptional week-long performance and for the win in the final. There can be no better motivation."

The main draw field at the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix is traditionally of a Grand Slam standard. What's your secret of success? Markus Günthardt: "Putting it simply, we offer the players the conditions in which they can perform at their best. It begins with the excellent practice facilities they find here and ends with the full arena with a fantastic atmosphere. I have to pay the Stuttgart crowd a big compliment as the atmosphere in the Porsche Arena is fabulous not matter whether a qualifier or a Top 10 player is on court. It's something the players really appreciate."

Anke Huber: "The feel-good factor plays a big part too. The players stay in the hotel right next to the arena and can walk to practice and the matches. It's so nice seeing them feeling at home here and seeing them keep coming back. For many players, Stuttgart is a fixture when planning their season. It gives us a certain amount of pride. And we try to anticipate the players' every wish."

By handing out wildcards you also give German youngsters the chance to take on the world's best. Now important is that for you? Anke Huber: "It's always nice having so many top stars here. But as a tournament in Germany, we also have a responsibility towards German juniors. It's a responsibility we're very pleased to meet. To get to the top, talented youngsters also have to play the big tournaments. By giving them qualifying wildcards, or even main draw ones, we give them the chance to gain important experience for their later careers against the world's best players. All the decisions are made jointly with the national coach Barbara Rittner and the German Tennis Association."

What experiences have you made with this method of fostering talented youngsters? Anke Huber: "In the past years, our young players have always done quite well in the Porsche Arena and have taken their chances. Last year, Eva Lys and Nastasja Schunk, were both given a qualifying wildcard and then played their way into the main draw. It was an impressive performance as qualifying is also always extremely strong here. Eva then even won the first round against a Top 40 player. We'll therefore continue down the same path giving young German players a platform where they can showcase themselves in the future too."

The Porsche Tennis Grand Prix traditionally offers its visitors an attractive off-court programme of side events. Anything new this year? Markus Günthardt: "New this year is the Racket Sports World in the tournament's public village. On all nine days of the event, visitors in the Hanns-Martin-Schleyer-Halle are offered a wide range of interesting activities focussing on tennis, padel, table tennis, badminton and touch tennis. People buying a ticket for the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix also have free admission to the Racket Sports World. For the first time, there are however also separate tickets for the public village with the all the exciting activities."

How important are such side events for the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix? Markus Günthardt: "They're very important from my point of view as we'd like our spectators to spend the whole day in the arena. But we can't expect them to stay seated watching tennis for ten hours in the stands. We therefore have to, with attractive activities, create the conditions in which they are perfectly happy to spend such a long time in the arena. And another important point is that we want to cater specifically for families, and they don't always have the same interests. By offering a wide colourful mixture of activities, we hope there is something for everybody. The Porsche Tennis Grand Prix should continue to be an event for the whole family."

Ticket sales

Tickets for the 46th Porsche Tennis Grand Prix in the Porsche Arena from 15 to 23 April are available at Easy Ticket Service – in Internet at www.easyticket.de or by calling +49 711 / 2 55 55 55. Further information about the tournament can be found at www.porsche-tennis.com.

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Consumption data

Taycan Turbo S Sport Turismo (Predecessor model)

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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