



A launch pad for a tennis career



For the second year in a row, spectators who come out to the 90th International Bavarian Championships might well get a glimpse at some of Europe's future stars. Eight of Europe's very best are gathered in the relaxed setting of Munich's Iphitos club to match skills against each other this week.

The tournament now known as the Eclipse Challenge Cup was founded last year by BMW Tournament Director Rudi Berger and George Pascal, Executive Director of the junior invitational's organizer ITMS Sports. With Iphitos' snow covered courts serving as a backdrop, the two tennis impresarios sat down for a friendly chat to discuss the state of tennis in Europe. Both concurred rather quickly that more had to be done to support the development of future European players. Berger, always looking to add to the entertainment value of the BMW Open, agreed that he would provide the stage while Pascal would develop the tournament format, provide the players and the organization.

The sincere idea behind the tournament's origin, a commitment to support junior tennis in Europe, remains the philosophy behind the Eclipse Challenge Cup. Junior players often shunned to the outer courts at the Grand Slam junior events play on the second stadium in Munich and get to compete in front of sizable crowds. The wild card spot for next year's BMW Open Qualifying Tournament is also an enticing prize for the talented teenagers trying to make the jump to the pro ranks. "There is no doubt that the Eclipse Challenge Cup can well serve as a launch pad for a career in professional tennis" says Pascal, whose agency now runs the event.

Last year's success which came in the form of praise from coaches and players and lots of appreciation from

spectators, turned out to be the impetus to further develop the format to an invitational format this year. And Wrigley's support as title sponsor with its Eclipse brand in only the tournament's second year is further testament of the concept's highly regarded cause. "The



BMW Tournament Director Rudi Berger and George Pascal, Executive Director of ITMS Sports, hope that the new junior concept will help Europe's juniors make the transition to the main tour.

Wrigley Company has a strong reputation of supporting youth and developing talent," explains Kai Panholzer, Managing Director of Wrigley Germany. "We are therefore delighted to serve as title sponsor for the Eclipse Challenge Cup."

Both Berger and Pascal see the initial success as the beginning to an exciting future. A main draw wild card and an expanded field could be next according to Pascal, who sees the tournament headed in the right direction. "We aim to establish the Eclipse Challenge Cup as a fixture in the international junior tournament calendar," so the head of ITMS Sports.