



# Wheelchair Tennis South Africa

Unleashing potential beyond limitations

**W**heelchair tennis is a young sport in South Africa, now only in its tenth year. For the past eight years Airports Company South Africa has been the main sponsor of the sport through Wheelchair Tennis South Africa (WTSA). It is gratifying that this support has enabled the sport to flourish, and today, more than 450 players receive coaching each week at 45 active development centres across South Africa.

Amazingly, South Africa has 60 players on the world rankings, surpassed only by Japan. Furthermore, WTSA has two players (Kgothatso Montjane and Lucas Sithole) in the world's top 10. Four players qualified on merit for the London Paralympics in London in 2012.

Considering that the sport is so young, South African players have raced up the world rankings. Among some of the top spots are:

- Lucas Sithole, South Africa's number one quadriplegic player has now achieved a personal best ranking of world number five.
- Kgothatso Montjane (fondly known as 'KG'), South Africa's number one woman player, has achieved a personal best ranking of number six in the world.
- Evans Maripa took the South Africa men's number one slot and is now ranked 25 in the world. He qualified for the singles and doubles at the Paralympics.
- Sydwell Mathonsi is number 36 in the world and also qualified for the singles and doubles in London.
- KG and Lucas were both finalists for South Africa's sportsman/woman of the year with a disability.
- South Africa has five of the top 10 junior boys in the world, including Gift Lekganyane, the world number one.
- Within the junior girls division, we have two players within the top ten, with Mariska Venter ranked world number one.



So many 'firsts' were achieved in 2012 but it is worth singling out KG's achievements.

Not only is she the first woman from Africa to be nominated for the International Paralympic Committee's Athlete of the month and the first African player to be invited to compete in the World Singles and Doubles Masters, but she is also the first African to be invited to play in a Grand Slam event.

This is limited to the top eight women in the world and Kgothatso is determined to fight her way into the top four in the coming year.

In 2013, WTSA hosted six International Wheelchair Tennis events, of which two attracted some of the world's top players. The Airports Company South Africa SA Open is one of only six Super Series events in the world, and can be equated to a grand slam level event on the able-bodied tour.



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