

Davis Cup – case history

(prepared around 1984)

West Nally as the marketing consultant to the International Tennis Federation (ITF) handles its major events. These include the Davis Cup, the Federation Cup and the new World Youth Cup.

We began our overhaul of the Davis Cup in 1981, against a daunting background of existing contracts and national and local agreements. Over the past four years, the competition has been transformed, by every measurement that matters.

Television coverage and spectators have increased. Sponsor impact and presentation are enhanced. The event is properly funded. Better press understanding of the competition is fuelling – in turn – TV and spectator interest.

West Nally took over the marketing of the Davis Cup in 1981. Popular mythology says that ‘commercialism’ can damage respected, established sports events. In this case, the reverse has happened. The Davis Cup is now better presented, with a select group of exclusive advertisers and higher standard of court presentation than at any time in recent history.

The old format of the Davis Cup was a mess, requiring 16 months of play to complete each year’s competition, leaving the public confused and uninspired.

Working with West Nally, the ITF decided to forget the continents, banish the old zonal system and devise a plan whereby the strongest nations competed for the trophy in a simple, knockout tournament. The other teams were offered the incentive of promotion to the top group.

The World Group was born. The competition now takes place in four well-defined rounds and is completed in one year. Each round has a pre-set week reserved in the international tennis calendar. This has advantages:

- Nations can plan long in advance and organise their teams
- Television coverage can be ‘packaged’ to show a variety of ties from each round. The coverage then appeals to TV audiences even in countries not directly involved.
- The competition is easily comprehended and followed by the public

West Nally secured the NEC Corporation as the sponsor which would underwrite the new Davis Cup. From the start, NEC was made aware that this opportunity was a joint venture with the ITF, requiring development on a mutual basis.

The major problem facing West Nally was the need to give NEC effective court signage at 60 ties throughout the world, each country with its own David

Cup sponsorships agreements and each venue with existing advertising contracts.

A gradual clean-up ensured and all commercial rights were returned to the ITF.

This international rights clearance protected NEC's position. It also cleared the way for the introduction of international sponsors in specialised areas, to help fund the competition.

For instance, Coca-Cola has a soft drinks cooler on every court. Lacoste dressed the ball boys and has its name on all linesmans' platforms. In addition, Ebel Watches and Volvo have become Davis Cup sponsors, to create a group of five who identify with the competition in its entirety.

The process took three years but the end result has been impressive.

Every year, West Nally prepares an exhaustive venue-dressing manual which goes to the 60 tennis federations responsible for staging Davis Cup ties. It shows how each court should be prepared and both defines and illustrates how all sponsors should be presented.

In addition, an experienced West Nally executive attends all "World Group" ties in the top 16 nations. This degree of care is important, with sponsors paying considerable sums of money. It also enables us to bring marketing support to the national associations.

Sponsors are encouraged to make the fullest use of the opportunities provided, with product displays, entertainment facilities and marquees, promotions, active roles in the press centres and in public relations initiatives.

Part of the new Davis Cup has been a deliberate expansion of television coverage, with specially prepared highlights programmes summarising each round as an addition to the normal, live coverage.

This format is ideal for countries that are not directly involved in a specific tie, but who nonetheless are interested in tennis. It gives an overview of the competition, rather than showing a specific fragment.

Television coverage has increased very substantially. The Final, for instance, was shown in 5 countries in 1979 and 25 countries in 1983. The record of 30 countries was achieved by West Nally in 1982.

Even more important in terms of giving consistent exposure to the sponsors, the earlier rounds are now shown in many countries not directly involved in the ties.

The creation of a special 26-part series for cable television has been 'topped and tailed' with sponsor credit and includes sponsor advertising. This is

shown in Europe on Sky Channel – a network with 227 cable systems reaching 2.8 million cable homes.- and throughout the world.

Such sponsored programming, the rights of which are held and controlled by the ITF, reinforces the sponsors' link with the event and ensures a much greater impact that is – to a great extent – controllable.

It has been integrated with a huge volume of print, including posters, programmes and tickets, running to more than two million items annually throughout the world.

In addition, West Nally has created special vehicles to promote the sponsors, such as the regular Davis Cup newspaper.

As much as possible with such a big competition, the Davis Cup is now presented in a streamlined fashion.

The new Davis Cup symbol has been registered and is now the subject of a licensed merchandise programme.

From difficult beginnings, the Davis Cup sponsorship has become a success story with few parallels. Yet, before we started, we were told the event was 'impossible to sponsor' because of the confused ownership of rights.

No two events are the same. However, what matters is the ability to solve problems – which West Nally has demonstrated over the four years of its relationship with the Davis Cup.

Financial resume of the Davis Cup 1981-1986

Sponsorship – 5 companies have generated	\$23.1 million
Licensing – as well as providing a useful adjunct to the sponsorship it has brought in income of	0.1 million
Television -	1.0 million
TOTAL	US\$ 24.2 million

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