



More Than Just Wheelchair Tennis

**31st International Wheelchair Tennis Tournament
July 3–7, 2018, Centre Sportif du Bois-des-Frères**

by Jo Kitson and Fay Rogers

A New AIWC Charity

As part of our 60th Anniversary, the AIWC Tennis Activity leaders were thrilled to have the opportunity to be involved in this amazing wheelchair tournament now in its 31st year in Geneva. Our tennis representatives and Volunteer Services leaders met with the organizing team to see how we might be able to help. The biggest need is volunteers, especially English-speaking helpers, since the 80 or so international players speak English. We can be very helpful in the canteen, in the kitchen, on the courts calling lines, and even our children can help—ball boys and girls are always needed, with over 150 matches played during the event. If you or your children want to help, please sign up by contacting Jo Kitson. Obviously finances are also critical. To help in this respect, the Board has agreed to fund a lunch for the ball boys and girls, and our Wednesday morning tennis players are taking a collection at their Spring Open Lunch on May 2 to supplement this donation. As the

organizers confessed, marketing “Handisport” events is difficult but so rewarding once you are involved.

Wheelchair Tennis— and It’s All Free!

So what are you doing the first week in July? Are you looking for

something to do that inspires and guarantees the feel-good factor for the entire family? What about a little excursion that promises everyone exciting competition? If you like sports, competition and watching talented players excel, you won’t want to miss this amazing Wheelchair Tennis Tournament. At present there are more than 80 international players inscribed, including 8 of the top 10 in the world. There are categories for both men and women in singles, doubles and quads (short for quadriplegic players whose four limbs are partially or fully paralyzed.) The players use special wheelchairs and watching these players cleverly manipulate these chairs, going after lobs, hitting slices, topspin and drop shots is truly inspirational—and entry is free!

History of Wheelchair Tennis

Wheelchair tennis was founded in the United States in 1976, by Brad Parker and Jeff Minnenbraker. France was the first country in Europe to organize a wheelchair tournament and is credited for helping to bring it to Switzerland. Wheelchair tennis has grown so rapidly that today there are over 50,000 wheelchair tennis players worldwide. Until now the Netherlands has dominated at the major wheelchair tournaments. It was first introduced as an exhibition sport at the 1988 Paralympics in Seoul and it became an official Paralympic event at the 1992 games in Barcelona. After the 2000 Summer Paralympics in Sydney, the sport was added to the four Grand Slams of tennis. Today there is a professional touring circuit that encompasses 128 countries, and Geneva’s tournament is recognized as one of the very best of its kind in the world. While the wheelchairs are adapted for the game, the basic rules, the size of the court, the height of the net, the balls and the rackets used are identical to the game played by able-bodied players. However, there are two major differences in wheelchair tennis: the ball may bounce twice, and the second bounce may occur outside the lines of the court. Quads are also allowed to use electric wheelchairs and sometimes have the rackets taped to their hand.



"More Than Just Wheelchair Tennis," *continued*



So join us at the matches and give us a hand or just come as a spectator—you won't be disappointed! If you cannot participate, but wish to contribute, just drop off your contribution in an envelope addressed to "Wheelchair Tennis" at the Welcome Desk. Don't forget to leave your name and contact information so the organizers can appropriately thank you.

Switzerland's Nalani Buob, born with spina bifida, is ranked World no. 1 in Girls Wheelchair Tennis and World no. 26 among Women. The organizers are hoping she will return again this year to Geneva for this tournament. She believes her hard work and training will pay off at the Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020, where she is aiming for Gold. ♦

Address:

**Centre Sportif du Bois-des-Frères,
ch. de l'Ecu 22, 1219 Châtellaine.**

Match Schedule: July 3–7, 2018

Telephone: 022 418 87 00

This club is accessible by the TPG:

**Bus 51, Stop "Ecu" and Buses 6, 19,
23, Stop "Bois-des-Frères"**

Free Parking. Free Entry

Caves

The Geneva "Caves Ouvertes" is an annual event (always on a Saturday at the end of May) in the canton of Geneva where wine producers open their doors to the public. You buy a glass for CHF 10 and then proceed to as many "caves" as you can fit into your day—filling, swirling, swishing and spitting wine to your heart's content. (Confession—I did drink the wine occasionally).

