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Aug. 4, 2004 23:38

Smashnova-Pistolesi will play in Olympic tennis tournament

By [FRANKIE SACHS](#)

At long last, the disagreement between Anna Smashnova-Pistolesi's sponsor and the Olympic Committee of Israel has been worked out so that the star player can concentrate on competing at the Athens Games.

Smashnova, who is sponsored by the Italian sporting goods company Lotto, was in doubt for the games since her contract required her to appear only in Lotto apparel, while Israel's Olympic team must wear Speedo.

At a press conference in Tel Aviv, Dr. Ian Froman, chairman of the Israel Tennis Association, announced that a deal had been brokered whereby Smashnova will play in a "clean" shirt, without the logo of either company, while off the court she will wear Speedo products. However, she will be allowed to play in Lotto shoes.

Froman thanked the companies for ironing out the agreement, and gave a special thanks to former Olympic medalist Yael Arad, who made a valuable, behind-the-scenes effort to resolve the issue.

Smashnova, who is competing this week in Stockholm, Sweden, is surely relieved by the agreement.

Earlier this week, she released a statement saying, "To be an Olympian feels like I have achieved a lifelong accomplishment and I look forward to a once-in-a-lifetime experience...

"Coming from an individual sport, I especially love the chance to be part of a team with so many other great athletes... Being chosen to represent your country is special to every athlete. I've worked very hard for this and I deserve this chance to both serve and make my



Anna Smashnova-Pistolesi will participate in the upcoming Olympic Games after a settlement was reached between two rival sponsors.

Photo: **AP**

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country proud."

At the press conference, the ITA released a schedule packed with international tennis events through the rest of the calendar year. Israel will host Finland in Davis Cup play in September; international youth tournaments for ages 14-16 in October and November, a four-week-long \$25,000 ATP men's satellite event in November, and in the first week of December a \$25,000 ITF women's event in which two of Israel's top players, young Shahar Pe'er and Tzipi Obziler, are scheduled to compete. Smashnova will attend the ITF event, and although she will not compete, she has committed to play an exhibition match. The following week (December 6-11), Ra'anana will host the Israeli Championships with prize money totalling NIS 53,000.

The ITA, which has raised over NIS 1 million to improve promotion of the sport in Israel, said September 29 will be designated as "Girl's Tennis Day" at the Hadar Yosef National Tennis Center. On that day, girls aged 7-11 are invited to the Center for free lessons and an explanation of the game. Any girl who is interested in taking up the sport will receive two additional free lessons and, if she chooses to continue, will be provided a racquet free of charge by the ITA. Moreover, all girls and women will be granted free admission to the Davis Cup tie with Finland.

Smashnova defends title

Smashnova-Pistolesi (18) has returned to Europe to defend her title at the Nordea Nordic Light Open. Last year, when the Israeli topped Croatia's Jelena Kostanic in the final, the hardcourt tourney was held in Helsinki, Finland, but it has since been relocated to Stockholm.

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Smashnova is the top seed and defeated Hungarian Melinda Czink (96) 6-2, 6-1 Wednesday in the opening round. Next up for Israel's top female tennis player is Sandra Kleinova of the Czech Republic (103).

Ram, Erlich set to face Bryan Bros.

Andy Ram and Yoni Erlich, were scheduled to face the top-ranked doubles team in the world, Bob and Mike Bryan of the US, later Wednesday in a second-round match at the \$2,450,000 Cincinnati Masters tournament.

Israel's top doubles team (ranked 11th in the world) is looking for a little revenge after losing to the Bryans in a semifinal match last month in Los Angeles.

Earlier in the week, Ram and Erlich defeated Americans Robby Ginepri and Jeff Morrison 6-3, 6-4.



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Photo: **AP**

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