

# Budapest Stadium To Be Named After Tennis Legend

## OWNER'S PERSEVERANCE KEEPS BUDAPEST ON WORLD TENNIS MAP

The annual Budapest Grand Prix international women's tennis tournament is organized the 14th time this summer.

BY SANDOR LACZKO

> "IN PROFESSIONAL TENNIS, on and off the court, only those can do well who put progress ahead of everything, make continuous investment and work an awful lot". That is the philosophy driving Jenő Markey, the owner of the Romai Tennis Academy recreation center in northern Budapest.

If you look at the continuously developing premises you can see the commitment characteristic of him and his staff to host the Budapest Grand Prix international women's tennis tournament for the 13th time this year.

As of 2009, the stadium, built around the center court last year, will be named after Hungarian tennis legend József Asbóth, the only Hungarian winner of a men's Grand Slam title.

In 1947, he defeated South Africa's Eric Sturgess in the final of the French Open at the Roland Garros in Paris.

The following year, he was semifinalist at Wimbledon. In the late 1940s, Asbóth was ranked in the world's top ten thanks to his exceptional footwork, fighting spirit, great forehand shots and tactical ability. The inauguration ceremony will take place prior to the final of the GDF Suez Grand Prix on July 12th. The Romai Tennis Academy was launched in 1982 with three tennis





courts. "In 1995, we had the first ITF tournament for women here and it was so successful that a year later, we could join the WTA Tour, a series of professional women's tournaments," Marky says. The tournament started in the Tier V category, to be followed by Tier IV. Two years ago, the Budapest Grand Prix was promoted into the Tier III category and, at the same time, to be situated among the top 40 competitions in the world", he says proudly, adding that on the WTA Tour, the Budapest event is the only tournament where the premises and the Tour rights are owned by the same proprietor. According to data received from the WTA, this tournament secures the largest media presence for Budapest and Hungary in the world after the Formula One car race. Women's tennis is so popular, said to be in the top three sports in television popularity, that this event could be an attractive feature in incoming tourism, as well. Despite this fact, the event has yet to receive support from the government. The stadium is also suitable for concerts and other cultural events. As of last year, the Budapest Grand Prix features live score service, which means

> MATCH POINT: **Jeno Marky, owner of Romai Tennis Academy took Diplomacy and Trade on a tour in his kingdom, to be named after Hungarian tennis player Jozsef Asboth (pictured on opposite page).**

that as soon as the umpire enters the score after each ball won, it will appear on certain sites on the Internet. In 1988, in the midst of the political changes, German, Belgian and French television companies came to Hungary to make reports with 100 Hungarian entrepreneurs. They came back 10 years later and found that two ventures were still important from the international point of view. One was Jeno Marky's Romai Tennis Academy, thanks to its world series tournament, and the other one was Jozsef Bock's renowned winery in Villany, southern Hungary. The television reports presented Hungary as a future member of the European Union through the examples of these two people. The tennis Budapest Grand Prix has always been famous for pampering the competitors. Programs and services provided for the players have always been as if it was of higher category. The Hungarian capital is very suitable for hosting such an event. The Romai Tennis Academy has recently been

declared a special sports zone by the city council of Budapest so that the premises can be further developed. Funding for the infrastructural development comes from loans and this way, the investment is a big challenge. However, Jeno Marky says he had no choice but to go ahead if he wanted to secure the future of the Budapest Grand Prix.

There is no need to emphasize how much this tournament means for Hungarian tennis. "In 2007, Agnes Szavay was 234th in the world ranking and was given a wild card to enter this tournament. This may have been an important impetus for her to make it to the top 20 in 2008," Jeno Marky explains. The Romai Tennis Academy ([www.rta.hu](http://www.rta.hu)) provides the opportunity for its club members to play tennis, plays an important role in bringing up new generations. The establishment features eight tennis courts, has a squash center (with five squash courts) and a swimming school. All this comes with a lounge, a gym and dressing rooms of international standard. Once a year, all these facilities are at the disposal of some of the best players in the world. This year, the GDF Suez Grand Prix, with a total prize money of USD 220,000, is likely to feature last year's champion Alize Cornet of France as well as other Top 40 players like Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, Sybille Bammer of Austria, Alisa Kleybanova of Russia or Alona Bondarenko of the Ukraine – and of course, the local favorite, Agnes Szavay. <

