

# **BABOLAT**

*Creating game since 1875*

Founded in 1875, the same year as tennis itself, BABOLAT is the first company to have specialised in racket sports. Right from the start, the name BABOLAT has been synonymous with innovation, competition and winning. Throughout the history of tennis and throughout the world, BABOLAT has made a name for itself. From the first Davis Cup, to the Masters, Roland Garros, Wimbledon, US Open or Australian Open, the legendary VS has been found on the most renowned podiums - sometimes even on both sides of the court! Top players like the Musketeers, Petra, Pietrangeli, Ashe, Nastase, Borg, Wilander, Becker, Sampras... have all been winners using BABOLAT strings. And since Carlos Moya's victory at Roland Garros in 1998, BABOLAT has become the symbol of "total tennis" : BABOLAT develops strings and rackets, a winning combination!

## **Tennis strings: a fantastic adventure**

In 1875, an Englishman named Bussey, manufacturer of tennis frames and rackets, came to France to meet Pierre BABOLAT and an incredible adventure began. 127 years later, BABOLAT, is the unquestionable leader in natural gut strings and has won most of the top-ranking international competitions. As tennis evolved, the brand was able to anticipate, foresee, and stimulate the progress of a sport that was becoming more and more popular as time went on. Since 1925, and the appearance of the world renowned VS strings, BABOLAT had written a page in the history of world tennis, and at the same time, established itself as a forerunner in innovation.

With the fifties came the synthetic revolution and the development of BABOLAT's "Elascord", a nylon sheath encasing other extremely thin nylon threads. At the very beginning of Nylon strings, Elascord brought more flexibility to the game when compared to the monofilament strings that preceded it. In the years that followed, BABOLAT invented multifilament strings, whose VX quality soon became the top of the line in synthetic strings....

It was only natural that the leading manufacturer of natural gut strings would be interested in the art of stringing rackets. So in 1981, BABOLAT set up its own competition department and very soon became world leader in stringing machines. Now completely electronic, these machines provide very high-precision tensions that players can count on before the match!

## **Racket equipment: the adventure continues**

Soon after the Second World War, the technicians at BABOLAT put their know-how to work on racket frames. In less than 30 years, the brand has met with unparalleled success. From electronic stringing machines to grips and vibration dampeners, including the invention of the world-renowned Elastocross, BABOLAT has continued to revolutionise the world of modern tennis equipment. A forerunner once more, defining the tennis of tomorrow!

## **The racket: a success story**

More than a century after the beginnings of tennis, BABOLAT is still the world leader in natural gut strings. Only one area of expertise was missing: the racket frame. So in 1994, right in the middle of a world tennis crisis, BABOLAT rose to the challenge of creating its own range of rackets. Only four years later, in 1998, Carlos Moya won Roland Garros with a BABOLAT racket in hand. The success story began and today BABOLAT now embodies "total tennis" in all its forms.

## **New tennis balls !**

In 2001, BABOLAT confirms its goal of becoming the specialised brand of racket sports by launching a range of tennis balls adapted to each type of player.

## **Babolat launches a new range of tennis shoes equipped with Michelin soles.**

Leaders in their respective markets, Michelin and Babolat have combined their know-how and innovative abilities to develop in 2003 the first range of tennis shoes with a Michelin sole. To create this new range of products, Babolat performed precise analyses of tennis players' movements and their needs on different types of playing surfaces.

Babolat turned to Michelin, experts in tire design adapted to different surfaces, to partner the development of a special sole delivering top performance.

The Michelin-Babolat partnership unites two companies with shared values and a single goal : optimising the winning performance of tennis enthusiasts!

Along with this new range of shoes, Babolat launches in 2003 a range of tennis technical apparel, with 360° motion concept.

After 129 years of total passion for tennis, BABOLAT offers players a complete line of the highest quality equipment. Backed by its history, the brand is considered as a leader and an ongoing source of innovation. Considered as a major sport at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tennis is continuously evolving. For 129 years, BABOLAT has been a part of that evolution, committed to improving the tennis of today and passionately creating the tennis of tomorrow!

## **Babolat: a few facts and figures**

Founded in Lyon (France) in 1875, Babolat is the oldest company specialized in racket sports and the world leader in stringing. Easily identifiable with its double line - white on the racket frames, black on the stringing - Babolat has built its brand image by offering products at the cutting edge of technology and by equipping generations of champions who have won the prestigious tournaments. Today, present in more than 100 countries, Babolat has diversified its offering to provide players with a full set of technical equipment: stringing (natural and synthetic), rackets, balls, grips, accessories, shoes and textile products.

### **Key dates for Babolat**

- 1875: Foundation of the company in Lyon, France, by Pierre Babolat. Babolat invents the stringing for tennis rackets.
- 1925: Launch of the famous VS stringing, made of natural gut. Used by the "Mousquetaires": Borotra, Brugnon, Cochet and Lacoste, as well as by Suzanne Lenglen.
- 1975: Babolat invents electric and then electronic stringing machines
- 1986: Launch of Babolat synthetic stringing "made in France"
- 1994: Launch of the first range of Babolat tennis rackets
- 1998: First victory for Babolat rackets in a Grand Slam event: Carlos Moya wins Roland Garros and becomes world no. 1 a few months later
- 2001: Launch of a range of tennis balls
- 2003: Launch of a range of shoes, in partnership with Michelin, a range of technical textile products. Andy Roddick and Kim Clijsters become world #1 with Babolat racquets and strings.
- 2004: launch of Team Clay, a new model in the range of tennis shoes developed in partnership with Michelin, and of an innovative concept of racquet Aeropro, endorsed by Rafael Nadal.

### **Babolat: a few figures**

Foundation: 1875

Production sites: Lyon, Plöermel, Besançon

6 commercialization affiliates: France, United States, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain

100 importers and distributors worldwide

Commercial presence: 10,000 shops and 20,000 clubs worldwide.

Presence in competition: more than 100 wins in Grand Slam events. No. 1 brand among players in the TOP 50 for their rackets and stringing (source: NASDAQ Miami, March 03).