



Tennis' world number one Rafael Nadal - Technogym

FITNESS FOR PURPOSE

Technogym's Nerio Alessandri tells **Bernardo Domingues** how his company's 2012 sponsorship can tackle obesity and reduce the Games' carbon footprint.

A RECENTLY-SIGNED tier three supplier deal between London 2012 and Technogym will appease those who struggle to understand the association of McDonald's, Coca-Cola and Cadbury with the Olympic Games.

Besides the most obvious links between a company that promotes the wellness concept, and the London 2012 pledge to tackle obesity and other risks of a sedentary lifestyle by encouraging sports participation - the Italian-based multinational believes it can also help London be the greenest Olympics to date.

"Technogym's motto is 'Healthy people, Healthy planet'. We do everything possible to reduce energy consumption, but we want to do more," says Technogym founder and president Nerio Alessandri.

By 'more' he means not only developing a new range of products that use 40 per cent less electricity, but also groundbreaking equipment that can generate power from the human movement.

LOCOG and Technogym are keen to use this product line in 2012 so that the Olympic Village boasts a gym partially powered by the energy produced by the best athletes on the planet.

As the major global multisport event, the Olympic Games need a sizeable supply of fitness equipment for athletes and Technogym has assumed this role for ten years - London will be its fifth Olympic partnership.

Alessandri points out that Technogym can do much more for the 2012 Games than installing over 750 pieces of equipment for the Athletes Village and competition and training venues.

But what do the Olympics do for Technogym?

"Most of the athletes are the same over different editions [of the Games]. So from a

very young age, Technogym is now part of their lifestyle," explains Alessandri. "The Olympic Games is a lab where we can experiment technologies, services and, through high-performance athletes, receive feedback to improve the products and invent new concepts.

"It's like Formula One for the automobile industry. And for us, the Paralympic Games is also important. It's a very significant part of our experience for the feedback we receive in terms of rehabilitation and prevention."

While the Olympics offer the ideal opportunity to speak to a very special group of consumers, Technogym is now working on a platform to improve the relationship with its wider market, estimated at 30m people using more than 50,000 installations around the world. The leading company in the global fitness and wellness market, with a 22-per-cent share, it has developed products equipped with internet connections and displays through which users can access social networks to share experiences.

Another way of reaching the end user is to increase the number of direct-to-home sales in the company's total revenues - Technogym wants to see the current 15 per cent figure (as a share of total revenues) move up to 40 per cent over the next five years.

To achieve this, it counts on its unique proposition that mixes high-end technology, design, entertainment and customer services to create the 'complete Technogym experience'.

"We have a specific brand positioning. Technogym is like Apple. We respect IBM, Microsoft, Acer or Toshiba - it's not an arrogant approach; it's just a different approach," he says.

SHORTSTOP

Sasol: The South African Rugby Union said the energy and chemicals company failed to agree an extension to its existing \$20m shirt sponsorship deal after it failed to meet a revised valuation. The relationship between the two dates back to 2004. SARU commercial manager Khaya Mayedwa said a new shirt sponsor could come from the existing SARU family of sponsors, "but we cannot confirm until the book on Sasol has been closed".

Rugby World Cup: Toshiba was announced as the latest sponsor of next year's tournament in New Zealand. The electronics giant will supply a host of products and services for Rugby World Cup Limited, the operator of the International Rugby Board event, as part of the deal.

Gazprom: Red Star Belgrade agreed a \$19m sponsorship deal with the Russian energy giant. The five-year contract will see the AZS logo, which is Gazprom's new regional brand, appear on the Serbian team's shirts. It will also be given ad space on perimeter boards.

Adidas: The global apparel brand said it will move its global ad account from the 180 Amsterdam agency to Canadian-based Sid Lee, who has held the adidas Originals line account since 2008 and won several other parts of the company's business since then. According to UK magazine *MarketingWeek*, the handover process might take several months as 180 Amsterdam needs to finalise projects on which it is currently working.

The Jockey Club: The largest commercial group in British horseracing signed a two-year deal with Britvic Soft Drinks for its adult soft drink brand J20 to sponsor a new summer flat race series in 2010 and 2011. Britvic Soft Drinks, already a Jockey Club Racecourses partner and supplier of drinks and mixers to Jockey Club Catering, will be handed a package of marketing rights for the new series, to be named J20 White Blend Summer Series.

Carling: The Scottish Football Association announced a seven-figure, four-year sponsorship agreement with the beer brand. Carling is the first brand to support a wide range of SFA commercial activities and becomes the official beer of the Scottish national team and the Scottish Cup.