

TENNIS LEGEND MONICA SELES NAMED NEWEST MEMBER OF LAUREUS WORLD SPORTS ACADEMY

- **Nine-times Grand Slam winner becomes 42nd member of Laureus Academy**
- **'A woman of tenacity and courage' – says Laureus Chairman Edwin Moses**
- **'I am excited at the prospect of working with Laureus' - says Monica Seles**
- **New Academy member Seles visits New York 'Fight Back' project**
- **Laureus celebrates the universal power of sport to bring people together as a force for good**

NEW YORK, December 13, 2005 – Monica Seles, winner of nine Grand Slam tournaments, has been named the newest member of the Laureus World Sports Academy. She becomes the 42nd member of the Laureus Academy, a unique collection of the world's legendary sportsmen and sportswomen.

Seles was the dominant player in women's tennis in the early 1990s. In her career she won the Australian Open four times, the French Open three times and the US Open twice.

She became a tennis sensation in 1990 when she was the youngest ever winner of the French Open, at 16, beating Steffi Graf in straight sets. With a punishing two-fisted forehand, fierce backhand and a strong return of serve, she is considered by many to be the first power player in the women's game, paving the way for subsequent champions like Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova.

Seles' career was profoundly affected in April 1993 when she was stabbed by a deranged spectator during a match in Hamburg. Her physical injuries took a few weeks to heal, but the psychological scars left a deep impression and she did not return to competitive tennis for over two years.

Edwin Moses, Chairman of the Laureus World Sports Academy, said: "We are delighted to welcome Monica Seles as a new Academy member. Monica made an instant impact on her sport as an incredibly talented youngster and for many years was the outstanding player. What happened to her in Hamburg was a tragedy for her and for her sport, but her determination in fighting back to play again showed her tenacity and courage. That experience, awful though it was, has made her determined to give something back to society and to reach out to help underprivileged people through her work with Laureus."

Monica Seles said: "It is an honour to be invited to join the Laureus World Sports Academy and I am already excited at the prospect of working with so many legendary sports stars. The Sport for Good Foundation has done incredible work over many years and I plan to do what I can to help. In my career I experienced highs and lows and that makes me even more determined to get involved as much as possible "

The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation currently supports 39 projects worldwide, with at least one on every continent; a number which is growing each year. Its work focuses on helping young people overcome challenging social issues including poverty, homelessness, war, violence, drug abuse, discrimination and AIDS. More than 130,000 children have been helped by Laureus since its inception.

Monica Seles was immediately in action for the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, visiting the Fight Back project in Crotona in South Bronx. Crotona is one of the most racially diverse districts in New York City, comprising African-Americans, Dominicans, West Africans, Puerto Ricans, Hondurans and Mexicans. Over 90% of school children receive free lunches, only 27% of students can read at grade level and just 26% can demonstrate proficiency in maths.

The Fight Back project, based at the Mary Mitchell Centre, is a jiu-jitsu programme which aims to help women at risk of abuse. The women are generally African-American and Hispanic, either unemployed or in low-pay situations. They are all poor and need the confidence and skills that self defence classes teach.

With very little funding the jiu-jitsu programme has impacted on the lives of over 150 youngsters and 30 adults. With the support of the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, the programme will become a permanent component of the Centre and will be able to expand to help even more people. The longer term target for Fight Back is to reach out to high school students at risk of dropping out, to teens involved in gangs and violence and to the mobile classes within the shelter system.

At the heart of the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation is the Laureus World Sports Academy, a dedicated team of 42 legendary sportsmen and sportswomen, who have all volunteered their services in this cause, acting as global ambassadors, visiting projects to encourage young people to participate in sport and to draw public attention to the problems which afflict our society today.

The other members of the Laureus World Sports Academy are: Giacomo Agostini, Severiano Ballesteros, Franz Beckenbauer, Boris Becker, Ian Botham, Sergey Bubka, Bobby Charlton, Sebastian Coe, Nadia Comaneci, Yaping Deng, Kapil Dev, David Douillet, Emerson Fittipaldi, Sean Fitzpatrick, Dawn Fraser, Tanni Grey-Thompson, Tony Hawk, Miguel Indurain, Michael Johnson, Michael Jordan, Kip Keino, Franz Klammer, Dan Marino, John McEnroe, Edwin Moses (Chairman), Nawal El Moutawakel, Robby Naish, Ilie Nastase, Martina Navratilova, Jack Nicklaus, Pelé, Gary Player, Morné du Plessis, Hugo Porta, Vivian Richards, Mark Spitz, Daley Thompson, Alberto Tomba, Steve Waugh, Katarina Witt and Yasuhiro Yamashita.

Born in Novi Sad, Serbia (then Yugoslavia), Monica Seles began playing tennis at the age of six, coached by her father Karolj. She won her first tournament at the age of nine, despite not fully understanding the scoring system, and in 1985 at the age of 11, she won the prestigious Orange Bowl junior tournament in Miami, Florida, where she caught the attention of tennis coach Nick Bollettieri. In 1986, the Seles family moved from Yugoslavia to the United States, and Monica enrolled in the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy, where she trained for two years.

Seles played her first professional tournament in 1988 at the age of 14 and won her first career title at Houston in May 1989, where she beat Chris Evert in the final. Seles' victory at the French Open the following year made her an instant star. Facing Steffi Graf in the final, she saved four set-points in a first-set tie-breaker, which she ultimately won 8-6, and went on to take the match in straight-sets and become the youngest-ever French Open champion at the age of 16 years 6 months.

From 1991 to 1993, Seles dominated women's tennis, winning 22 titles and reaching 33 finals out of the 34 tournaments in which she played. She won the Australian Open three times in that period, the US Open twice and the French Open twice. She had a 55-1 win-loss record in Grand Slam tournaments, the only defeat being in the 1992 Wimbledon final where she lost to Steffi Graf. She was unable to play at Wimbledon in 1991 because of injury.

Everything changed for Seles on April 30, 1993, following the incident which shocked the tennis world. During a quarter-final match between Seles and Magdalena Maleeva at Hamburg, a 38-year-old deranged fan of Steffi Graf named Günter Parche attacked Seles with a knife. When she eventually returned to tennis, she won one more Grand Slam title, the Australian Open in 1996, when she beat Anke Huber in straight sets, and she reached three more finals, the US Open in 1995 and 1996, losing on both occasions to Steffi Graf, and the French Open in 1998 when she lost to Arantxa Sánchez Vicario, but she struggled to recapture her best form on a regular basis.

After becoming a US citizen, Seles helped the United States to win the Federation Cup in 1996 and 2000 and she also won a Bronze Medal at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. After winning 53 career titles up to 2003, Seles sustained a foot injury that sidelined her from the Women's Tour and effectively ended her career.

Laureus passionately embodies the very spirit of sport - the pursuit of excellence, overcoming challenges, celebrating achievement and excellence and winning against the odds,

Laureus attracts groups of people who share a belief in the power of sport to break down barriers, to engage with others and to change the world for the better,

Laureus speaks a single global language, linking rich and poor, privileged and deprived, the famous and the forgotten in a common quest to improve the quality of life for people across the globe,

Laureus brings together an *Academy* of sporting legends whose collective passion, influence and authority across the whole field of sport and human endeavour means they can promote and inspire changes in sporting and social issues, nationally and internationally,

Laureus regularly brings together the worlds of sport and entertainment to celebrate and honour the very best achievements of excellence in sport through the *Laureus World Sports Awards* and to showcase and generate support for the work of *the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation*,

Laureus, through the *Laureus Sport for Good Foundation*, supports and funds sports related programmes that bring together sporting heroes and children in deprived communities through inspirational projects that achieve real improvement in their quality of life,

Laureus has established national chapters around the world, using local sportsmen and women; *Laureus Friends and Ambassadors*, who best represent the true spirit of sport to promote and inspire social change in their own communities.

For further information please contact:

Laureus International Media Office

Tel: +44 (0)20 7514 2749

Fax: +44 207 514 2782

Email: media.affairs@laureus.com

Photo Archive: www.laureusarchive.com

Website: www.laureus.com

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