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Tennis Industry continues Bullish Streak into 2007

For Immediate Release: The tennis industry, after finishing a strong 2006 in racquet and tennis ball sales, has begun 2007 with more good news. First-quarter shipments of tennis racquets to dealers were up 11.5 percent in dollars and 8.9 percent in units over the same period in 2006. Tennis ball shipments also showed significant growth in the first quarter, up 8.4 percent in dollars and 8.7 percent in units compared to last year.

In racquets, the largest growth continues to be in the super premium category, which was up 32.1 percent in dollars and 22 percent in units compared to the first quarter of 2006. Also, sales of youth racquets were strong, up 17.6 percent in dollars and 14.6 percent in units over 2006.

The positive numbers in first-quarter tennis ball sales is an extremely good sign for tennis, says Jolyn de Boer, the executive director of the Tennis Industry Association, since ball sales have traditionally been a leading indicator of tennis participation in the U.S.

De Boer says she's encouraged by the continued growth. "First, the growth in unit sales the past three years shows some of our new-player programs are starting to work," she says. "Second, the growth in dollar sales shows consumers are buying more premium, high performance racquets as well and there's an increase in youth play. In fact, the largest growth category in the super premium category indicates positive reaction to the recent introductions of new technology frames from many of the top manufacturers."

The increases also tie in with what dealers expect for sales increases in 2007. According to the TIA Dealer Trend Late Season Report, dealers have seen an increase in sales for racquets, balls and shoes and are optimistic of an overall increase continuing in 2007.

"Overall, we are on the right track," says TIA President Dave Haggerty. "Industry sales are the most positive they have been in years, and the efforts to grow the game at the grassroots level have also intensified. Along with our industry partners and working closely with the USTA, we have promoted Tennis Welcome Centers for four straight years, the USTA has greatly expanded its Tennis in the Parks campaign among other programs, and Cardio Tennis, entering its third year, is seeing terrific media attention and success in attracting new and existing players."

These latest figures for the tennis industry continue the bullish streak begun four years ago. In addition to increased racquet and ball sales, research shows that tennis dealer and consumer confidence has grown, the number of new players trying tennis for the first time has increased, league tennis play has grown, and pro tournament attendance is up. Also, the sport has been enjoying increased visibility among the general public as tennis is being used to promote various products and images.

For more information, visit www.TennisIndustry.org or call the TIA at 843-686-3036, info@TennisIndustry.org

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The Tennis Industry Association is THE unifying force in the tennis industry providing programs, products, and services to promote the economic vitality of TENNIS. Core TIA initiatives include Consumer, Trade and Participation Research, Tennis Welcome Centers, Cardio Tennis, 50-50 Coop, Growing Tennis Programs, TennisConnect.org, TennisWire.org.