

40 year anniversary of Coca-Cola in Croatia

Zagreb, March 21, 2008 – Coca-Cola marked its 40 year anniversary in Croatia by signing a sponsorship contract with the Croatian Paralympic Committee (HPO) at the “Vinko Bek” Education center. In the next four years, as the main sponsor, Coca-Cola will provide HRK 500.000 each year for the Committee’s activities, which is a total of HRK 2 million. This is the first time that the Croatian Paralympic Committee has the main sponsor and it is also the sponsorship contract with the highest value signed by the Committee so far. Along with providing financial support, the objective is to raise public awareness of the poor conditions in which athletes with disabilities get ready for their competitions, of their needs and of their remarkable results as well.

Upon signing the sponsorship contract, Zoran Bogdanović, General Manager of Coca-Cola Beverages Croatia, said: “Coca-Cola has been demonstrating its corporate social responsibility for years, by funding institutions and projects that need financial support. We made a decision to mark our 40 year anniversary in a special way – by signing the sponsorship contract with the Croatian Paralympic Committee. However, this is not going to be just a one-time funding – we will support the Committee at least for the next four years. We are honored to be able to help athletes with disabilities, who have so far, despite the poor training conditions, showed incredible desire and potential not only to improve and participate but also to win in various world competitions. Persistence, the optimism that gives them power to achieve what seems impossible, excellence – these are exactly the values that Coca-Cola promotes and this is why we decided to become their partners and friends in their efforts to achieve best results in what they do.”

“For a long period, the Paralympic Committee was not successful in finding a long-term donator or sponsor which is why signing this high-value contract before the Paralympic Games in Peking is of great importance for us. It is true that sponsoring the HPO is not as appealing to companies as sponsoring some sports, athletes or clubs that are popular in Croatia. This is why we perceive this initiative shown by Coca-Cola to demonstrate their true social sensitivity,” said Ratko Kovačić, Chairman of the Croatian Paralympic Committee.

One of the most popular Croatian singers, Zlatan Stipišić Gibonni, will join Coca-Cola in its effort to popularize paralympic sports. During the next year, Gibonni will take part in many activities that will try to raise public awareness of problems that athletes with disabilities are facing. It is interesting that Gibonni turns 40 on the same day when Coca-Cola celebrates its 40 year anniversary. “I am glad to be able to help Croatian athletes with disabilities with what I do. I think that our community does not know enough about problems these athletes are facing, or the incredible results they are achieving. I believe we can do something to change it if we work together. The main role will be played by the media so I am asking you to support us in our efforts,” said Gibonni at the end of the press conference.”

The Croatian Paralympic Committee, as an umbrella organization for athletes with disabilities, points out that their main problem is to achieve optimum conditions for athletes to train and get ready to do their best at the Paralympic games. "Annual budget funds are unfortunately not enough to secure basic conditions for training and development programs, from providing easier access to sports halls, purchasing prosthetic devices, wheelchairs and equipment to building a sports hall for athletes with disabilities. We still didn't get funds to go to Peking. For all these reasons, it is necessary or us to have a sponsor," emphasized Ratko Kovačić, Chairman of the Croatian Paralympic Committee. However, even with the existing conditions, athletes with disabilities achieve significant results in international competitions. In 2006, they won 167 medals and 25 Croatian athletes, competing in 6 sports, will participate in the upcoming Paralympic Games.

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