# Tennis ace Sharapova signs for Sony Ericsson

**Fourth placed mobile handset vendor, Sony Ericsson, has announced that it has signed an exclusive four-year sponsorship agreement with female tennis ace, Maria Sharapova.**

**The 20-year-old Russian, who recently won the Australian Open, will feature in a series of new consumer brand campaigns targeted at Sony Ericsson's core audiences.**

**Sharapova will also be working with Sony Ericsson's design team on a range of products and accessories, the company said.**

**The deal follows Sony Ericsson's six year $88m global title sponsorship of the WTA Tour, which was signed in January 2005.**

**Dee Dutta, corporate VP and head of marketing at Sony Ericsson, said: "Now in our seventh year as a company, the brand has evolved significantly and securing a global brand ambassador is a natural progression to take our brand to the next level in an increasingly competitive market place.**

**"Our alignment with Maria's global iconic status, combined with our brand expertise and innovative thinking aims to provide something new and something different to our customers around the world."**

# Nokia faces backlash over German closure

Finnish handset vendor Nokia has sparked a political backlash over plans to close a handset manufacturing plant in Germany and make up to 2,300 workers redundant.

The company said that it will discontinue the production of mobile devices and close its Bochum site by mid-year.

Nokia said that Germany has become too expensive and it intends to move manufacturing operations to cheaper European sites.

Kurt Beck, head of Germany's SDP, called for a boycott on Nokia products, accusing Nokia of "caravan capitalism". German media reports that many citizens have already joined in the boycott, publicly disposing of their Nokia handsets.

# Trojan appears on unlocked iPhones

Security experts have identified what appears to be the first malicious software package specifically targeting unlocked Apple iPhones.

Finnish security shop F-Secure said that the Trojan installation package contains false application installation information that causes legitimate third party applications to be removed when the Trojan is uninstalled from the iPhone.

F-Secure said that the malware, which claims to be a firmware update to 1.1.3, was created by "an 11-year-old kid playing with XML files". Fortunately the only damage the Trojan does is display the word "shoes," but it's when users try to uninstall the software that it damages many other applications.

Websites hosting the malicious package were taken off-line soon after the discovery of the low-risk threat but F-Secure said that the incident raises concerns about what a skilled malware writer could achieve.

"Hopefully this serves as a warning for those who have opened their iPhones using a security hole in the system and then installing unverified software without a second thought to what they are doing," F-Secure said.

The malware only affects user unlocked devices and not those sold as unlocked by Apple or an operator partner.

Meanwhile, AT&T, the first carrier to launch the Apple iPhone, has introduced a number of tariffs for business users, pitching the device at the professional market.

Uses are still locked into a two-year contract, but business customers see their voice and data plans divided separately.

Customers choose a voice plan, then add one of three Enterprise Data Plans, all of which include unlimited data and Visual Voicemail. The only difference is the bucket of included text messages.

For $45 users get 200 SMS, $55 buys 1500 and $65 gives unlimited messages.

There are also two data roaming add-ons—$25 delivers 20MB of data to be used in any of 29 countries, or $60 for 50MB of data.

# The mobile reader

A US firm has launched what it claims is the world's smallest text to speech device. Using a Nokia N82, K-NFB Reading Technology has embedded software that is capable of 'reading' text on images captured by the terminal's camera then converting that content to voice.

The knfbREADER Mobile was developed in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind, and research and development company Kurzweil Technologies. It can store thousands of printed pages and users can transfer files to PCs or Braille notetakers.

Marc Maurer, president of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "The knfbREADER Mobile will allow the blind unprecedented access to the printed word, affording a level of flexibility and capability never before available. No other device in the history of technology has provided such portability and quick access to print materials. The NFB promotes equal opportunity for the blind, and this Reader will make blind people dramatically more independent. The result will be better performance at work, at school, at home, and everywhere else we go. This Reader will substantially improve the quality of life for the growing number of blind people and people who are losing vision, including seniors."

Users hear the contents of the document read in synthetic speech, while users who can see the screen and those with learning disabilities can enlarge, read, track, and highlight printed materials using the phone's display. The combination of text-to-speech and tracking features makes interpreting text much easier for individuals with learning disabilities.

# Moto buys Soundbuzz

Handset and equipment vendor Motorola has acquired mobile music company Soundbuzz for an undisclosed sum.

Soundbuzz is a privately held, pan-Asian music platform, and will help Moto expand its Asia mobile music offerings beyond China and into India, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

The US vendor said that it aimed to capitalise on the fact that well over 90 per cent of all digital music content in Asia is sold via mobile channels.

Soundbuzz's end to end platform includes subscriber management, content management, payment, client software and media delivery technologies. The company will also continue to provide white-label services to carrier customers.

Moto also released a handful of music focused devices including the ROKR E8, which has the ability to change its keypad layout depending on whether it is in 'music' or 'phone' mode.

# Sony adds Skype to PSP

Japanese electronics giant Sony has beefed up its PlayStation Portable (PSP) gaming device with the confirmation that it is to add Skype VoIP functionality.

Sony has made a firmware update available for the PSP-2000 series of devices, which includes the Lite and Slim models, containing the Skype internet telephony application.

Users will then be able to make VoIP phone calls when connected to a wireless network.

Sony has also made extra peripherals, such as microphones, available, to exploit the new functionality.

In instant retaliation, a team of homebrew developers, who make unofficial third party software for the PSP, announced their own open standard, SIP-based VoIP app.

Furikup, created by NoobZ, has been made available as a beta download and works with all variations of the PSP.

But this is not the first time Sony has thought about taking the PSP into the telephony arena. Last summer, the company struck a deal with UK carrier BT, to turn the gaming device into phone.

The two companies have signed a four year contract to develop a raft of extra features for the handheld gadget, adding wireless broadband communications functions, including video calls, voice calls and messaging.

Initially, the partnership intends to integrate BT's existing Broadband video and VoIP into the device, sending the traffic over the carrier's next generation 21CN network.

Previously, a patent application, filed by Sony Ericsson in 2006, popped up on the US Patent and Trademark Office website. The accompanying diagrams showed a device that looked very much like a PSP with a rotating display, which is designed to be used as a mobile phone, TV or gaming console depending on the configuration.

# Hackers get Google's Android to run

The first handsets to use Google's Linux-based Android platform are not expected until the second half of this year, but several enterprising hackers have already got the OS running on a handful of devices.

When the Software Development Kit (SDK) was released in November it did not offer support for hardware platforms, but featured a software emulator based on Qemu instead.

However, a developer known as Cortez created an Android installer from the SDK by combining it with a Poky Linux kernel, allowing others to boot the platform on the Sharp Zaurus PDA.

As well as several different versions of the Zaurus, Android has also been booted on the Atmark-Techno Armadillo-500 CPU board, although in all instances the operating system is limited in its functionality. Full capabilities look like they will only come with the commercial release of Android.

Taiwanese manufacturer Wistron NeWeb has also revealed that it is preparing to debut possibly the first Android ready phone. The GW4 device boasts a touch screen and a full qwerty keyboard, as well as a 2 megapixel camera, wifi, Bluetooth and VoIP. The device presently runs MontaVista Linux but is set to run Android when it is released.

## The Consumer Electronics Show

# Otellini looks to an ultra mobile future


Paul Otellini

Chip giant Intel is betting that that ultra mobile internet devices will be the "next big thing in computing," with the company making a significant push into the mobile space in 2008.

Speaking at the Consumer Electronics Show, Intel president and CEO, Paul Otellini, said that the world is, "going ultra mobile, with smaller, more powerful, connected mobile devices delivering a no-compromise web experience in an ultra low power device small enough to fit in your pocket or purse."

Intel shook up Nicholas Negroponte's One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative by withdrawing support and funding for the project after a fall-out between the two companies. The OLPC alleges that Intel had been using its position on the OLPC board to undermine the distribution of the XO device to kids, in favour of selling its own Classmate low cost laptop.

After a big build up in 2007, the chip maker said it plans to ship its first low power processor and chipset platform designed for mobile internet devices in the first half of this year. Codenamed 'Menlow', the single chip processor design claims to come in a package that is five times smaller and consumes ten times less power than ultra low voltage mobile processors introduced in 2006.

Featured on the Menlow-based designs are optional standardised capabilities such as wifi, 3G and WiMAX to enable more of an always-connected experience.

But WiMAX is high up on the company's agenda. During his presentation at CES, Otellini touted the advantages of WiMAX compared to other wireless broadband technologies in delivering a global internet network. "While other wireless technologies are still in development, WiMAX is ready to be deployed today," he said.

Otellini predicts that nearly 150 million people will be connected via WiMAX by the end of this year.

# NFC challenger from Sony

Japanese electronics giant Sony has lifted the curtain on its TransferJet close proximity wireless connectivity technology, going up against existing standards such as Bluetooth and even Wireless USB.

The proprietary technology will allow for the high speed transfer of large data files, between devices such as mobile phones, digital cameras, computers and TVs.

The technology offers speeds of up to 560Mbps and works within a 3cm range—just like Near Field Communication platforms.

Just touching a TV with a digital camera enables photographs to be instantaneously displayed on the TV screen. Alternatively, downloaded music content can be accessed by touching a mobile phone to a portable audio player.

# iRiver's 'iPhone'

Following Apple's successful jump from the portable media player market to the mobile phone space, gadget manufacturer, iRiver, is set to attempt a similar feat with the launch of a device later this year.

At the CES show in Las Vegas, photos emerged of a prototype GSM handset/media player, which is expected to hit shelves towards the latter end of the year. The gadget would be unlocked, so it could be used on any compatible network.

The device uses the now popular 3 inch touch screen and minimal hard keys, with some reports claiming that the unit will include 4GB of storage a 2 megapixel camera, GPS and potentially wifi.

# OpenMoko unveils FreeRunner Linux

Open source mobile phone outfit OpenMoko, which has been cooking a Linux-based touchscreen device for well over a year now, has finally unveiled its mass market gadget, the FreeRunner.

Based on the Neo 1973, which proved immensely popular with the open source development community when it was launched in late 2006, the FreeRunner rolls all the latest features into a consumer friendly package.

The FreeRunner uses a similar form factor to the Neo, with a 2.8" VGA touch screen, A-GPS, 128MB of memory, a microSD card slot, Bluetooth and USB, as well as adding wifi and motion sensors and a faster 500MHz processor.

FreeRunner will come in two versions: a 850MHz tri-band and a 900Mhz tri-band.

"FreeRunner's a significantly improved device from the Neo 1973. Our developers gave us great feedback as they explored the first version of the device," said Steven Mosher, VP of marketing for OpenMoko. "We added wifi, motion sensors, faster processing, and improved graphics, creating a compelling mass market device for open source development. The open source community was key in achieving that goal. Without them this remix of the Neo would not have been possible."

The FreeRunner was previewed at CES in Las Vegas this week and will ship later this spring.