

Sharapova to Push Samsung in Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Sharapova, a veteran of campaigns for Motorola and Sony, will be endorsing Samsung Electronics for 3 years. **For MT**

Maria Sharapova, the world's highest-paid female athlete, signed a three-year sponsorship deal with Samsung Electronics, her agent said.

The agreement covers Sharapova's native Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Max Eisenbud, her agent at IMG Worldwide, said in an interview. The deal, which started April 1 and covers Samsung products including mobile phones, tablet computers and television sets, may go global next year.

"Maria really hasn't been marketed that much in Russia," Eisenbud said. "It's important to her because that's where her roots are. I also felt that was a really untapped market, with the 2014 Sochi Olympics coming up."

Siberian-born Sharapova moved from Sochi on the Black Sea coast to the United States when she was 7 years old. In 2004, she achieved global fame by winning Wimbledon at age 17. Major

titles followed at the 2006 U.S. Open and the 2008 Australian Open, turning her into the world's best-paid athlete. Sharapova, who backed Sochi's bid to host the Winter Olympics, earns about \$25 million a year, according to Forbes magazine. She endorses companies including Nike, Swiss luxury watch brand Tag Heuer, jeweler Tiffany and Danone's Evian water.

Samsung, the world's biggest maker of televisions and memory chips, posted record revenue last year, helped by the popularity of its Galaxy smartphones. The company, also the world's second-largest handset maker, in 2007 extended a global sponsorship agreement with the International Olympic Committee through the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro.

The agreement with Samsung is the third mobile-phone deal for Sharapova, who made the finals of Wimbledon last season and the Australian Open in January and is currently ranked No. 2 in the world. The 24-year-old previously endorsed Motorola Mobility Holdings and had been global brand ambassador for Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications until that agreement expired at the end of last year.

Sony Ericsson, which signed a record \$88 million deal with the women's tennis tour in 2005, on Dec. 23 said it wouldn't extend its agreement with the WTA when it runs out at the end this year. In October, Sony agreed to buy Ericsson's stake in the joint venture for 1.05 billion euros (\$1.4 billion).

"Maria had a positive experience, and a positive four years with Sony Ericsson," Eisenbud said. "Now we are just looking forward to a new partnership with a great brand."

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