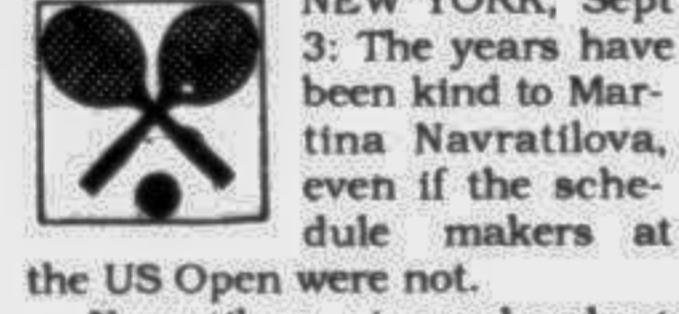


World number three Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario through with a double-fisted backhand in her match against American Linda Harvey. Wild on September 2. Sanchez-Vicario triumphed 6-2, 6-2.

—AFP photo

Navratilova goes on and on



NEW YORK, Sept 3: The years have been kind to Martina Navratilova, even if the schedule makers at the US Open were not.

Navratilova, six weeks short of her 37th birthday, still has the game and resolve to succeed in Grand Slam tennis, and she out on display Thursday night, dispatching Sabine Appelmans 6-1, 6-3, reports AP.

It took her just 60 minutes, but she had been waiting since Monday to play them.

"It was weird playing out there," Navratilova said. "I am glad I got it out of the way. I played Monday at 1 and I played Thursday at night. Is there a tournament going on here? I have been hitting at Central Park and biding time."

While Navratilova was defeating Appelmans on the grandstand, Boris Becker was next door in the stadium, playing a first-round match four days into the tournament. Navratilova just shook her head. "That is

beyond comment," she said. "Beyond 'No comment.'

The delay hardly disturbed the grand dame's game, though. She zipped through the match, although there were moments of frustration for her, starting with jets zooming over the National Tennis Center.

"I could hardly hear the ball with the planes," Navratilova said. "It really messed me up a couple of times."

Then there was the matter of not blitzing Appelmans, actually losing four games and even having her serve broken in the second set.

"She started playing better and I played about the same," Navratilova said. "I think I let her get in the groove of my serve a little bit. I didn't mix it up."

Her solution? "I try not to think about it," she said. "I pack my bags and go to the next city. And I call the hotel and tell them all that I forgot."

The one thing she always remembers, though, is her game. And it's there, whenever the schedule makers decide to put it on display.

"I think I am playing well

Mutola: A rag to rich saga



MAPUTO, Sept 3: Six years ago, when she was 15 and poor, Maria de Lurdes Mutola pretended she was a boy and played soccer for a Mozambican team, reports Reuter.

But joy quickly turned to tears when her team won the Maputo City League but were disqualified when the runners-up discovered that the winners had fielded a girl.

"Unfair," they said. She had scored the winning goal.

That seemed to be the end of a promising sporting career but then along came her country's greatest poet, Jose Craveirinha, a sports fan, who encouraged her to take up a less male-dominated sport.

Luizes, as everyone in Mozambique still calls the girl better known to the world as Maria Mutola, took his advice and trained every day under the poet's watchful eye.

Today the once-impoverished girl from one of the poorest countries in the world is the champion of the world over 800 metres, one of Africa's newly emerging queens of the track.

Tonight she is due to run in Brussels and after recent Grand Prix successes she is one of five athletes with a chance of winning 20 one kg bars of gold worth an estimated 200,000 dollars.

Mutola's rags-to-riches story sounds like a fairy tale even to her. "I still cannot believe what has happened in my life," says Mutola.

She was born in the poor Maputo suburb of Chamauculo on October 27, 1972, when her countrymen were fighting for independence from Portugal. After independence was won in 1975, the country was racked by civil war until a peace agreement was signed last October.

But despite Mozambique's continuing problems in the late

1980s, her international reputation was starting to grow.

She made her country's team for the 1988 African Championships in Algeria as a 15-year-old — just a few months after her identity was "unmasked" on the soccer field.

She won a silver medal in

1990, she won both the 800 and 1,500 metres at the African Championships, while in 1991 she won the 800 gold at the African Games and — still only 18 — finished fourth in the World Championships 800 in Tokyo in a world junior record and African senior record time of 1 minute 57.63 sec.

There was relative disappointment in the Barcelona Olympics when she was fifth in the 800 and ninth in the 1,500, but there was some consolation a few weeks afterwards when she won the 800 at the World Cup in Havana, Cuba.

But this has been her truly golden year.

Her failure to win a medal in Barcelona has been tempered with two World Championships titles — the 800 metres indoor in Toronto in March and the outdoor itself in Stuttgart last month.

Those two victories prove just how far she has developed in terms of tactical awareness since being criticised by her country's sports writers for being over-confident in Barcelona.

In Toronto, she ran from the front to win — in Stuttgart she made a late burst. That kind of adaptability is a sure sign of mature track craftsmanship in a runner not 21 until next month.

Every champion in Stuttgart not only won a gold medal, but also a Mercedes.

Things have certainly changed for Mutola in a short time and she says she will probably sell the Mercedes — she already has a car in the United States.

Asked recently what she was thinking of while striding towards the finish-line in Stuttgart — the Mercedes, the medal or her family back in Chamauculo, Mutola replied: "I only thought of winning."

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Sport

War of lords reaches its peak

LONDON, Sept 3: The chess wars start next week, with rival contests billed as World Chess Championships and behind-the-scenes battles for control of the game, reports AP.

Havelange, a Brazilian lawyer, said soccer's world governing body would decide the 2002 host in 1996.

Outlining certain conditions for staging the World Cup, Havelange said, "Japan does satisfactorily meet these conditions."

The conditions include security, a fine telecommunications network, a strong currency, five-star hotels and first-class hospitals, and an 80,000-seat stadium for opening and closing ceremonies.

When reporters noted that Japan does not now have an 80,000 seat stadium, Havelange replied, "I mentioned some 15-20 requirements for the presentation for candidacy. A decision will be taken only in 1996. Six years will remain before 2002, plenty of time for the improvement of facilities."

He mentioned Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, South and North Korea and China as other host candidates.

Havelange is in Japan for the Under-17 World Soccer Championship, and he praised "the outstanding organisation by the Japanese."

Defending champion Ghana

meets Nigeria in the finals

Saturday in Tokyo's National Stadium.

A total of 135,000 spectators

have attended the 30 matches

held so far across the country,

and it will reach 150,000 when

the tournament was held in

Rome two years ago, he said.

This compares with total at

attendance of 50,000 when the

tournament was held in Rome

two years ago, he said.

Chana, Japan, Mexico, Italy,

Nigeria, Australia, Argentina,

Canada, the Czech-Slovakia

Republics joint team, the United

States, Colombia, Qatar, Poland, Chile, Tunisia and China

played in this year's Under-17

championships.

Wattana still

wends his way

BLACKPOOL, England, Sept 3: Thailand's James Wattana will be the only Asian representative in the International Open after a dismal day for the continent's snooker players here on Thursday, reports AP.

Two Indians, two Thais and

Hong Kong's Franky Chan all

failed to progress to the final

qualifying competition for the

200,000 pound tournament.

Chan, the world number 79,

came the closest to reaching

the next phase when he lost 5-4 to Malta's Alex Borg in the seventh round.

"Bravo," said Anita DeFranz,

the sole American on the

93-member International Olym-

pic Committee, upon learning

Wednesday that a senior State

Department official declared all

governments should keep

hands off questions of Olympic

sites.

DeFranz said in a telephone

interview she won't decide how

to vote before hearing final pre-

sentations to the IOC Sept 23

session at Monte Carlo by the

five contending cities — Sydney,

Australia, currently rated the

second best

in the world.

Breaks of 55, 79 and 45

helped Borg to build a 3-1 lead

at the interval, but Chan rallied

strongly, winning the fifth frame

with a run of 50 and the sixth

on the black to level at 3-3.

The next two frames were

shared, but the attacking Malt

ese left-hander claimed a

scrappy decider.

Thailand's Noppadorn Nopp

achorn had also been beaten by

the odd frame in nine a round

earlier by England's Darren

Hackson.

The 1991 world amateur

champion, who was forced to