

World at her feet

WIMBLEDON

AP/AFIP, London

Get ready for the Maria Sharapova marketing blitz.

You'll see the new Wimbledon champion on all the talk shows, on sports and glamour magazine covers, in print ads and TV commercials.

She is 17 and about to become the world's most coveted female sports star.

Born in Russia, made in America, blessed with a fashion model's looks, a champion's game and poise far beyond her years, Sharapova is a marketing maven's dream.

"I hope it doesn't change the person I am right now because I really don't want that to happen," Sharapova said after her universe was unalterably transformed Saturday by a 6-1, 6-4 rout of two-time defending champion Serena Williams in the Wimbledon final.

"I already told a few people, 'If I change, then hit me in the head, please.'"

Serena and Venus Williams gave women's tennis a huge boost and made their own considerable impacts on fashion when they became champions. Anna Kournikova did the same without even winning. Now it's Sharapova's turn to grab the spotlight.

Sudden fame and fortune have a way of spinning many a teen's head out of control but there is something about Maria Sharapova that suggests she may be immune to the perils of stardom. Ask her what her most significant attribute is and she is quick to say it is her mental fortitude.

"I'm just a very tough person when I go on the court," she said.

"I just love to win and I want to fight."

She showed that over and over against Williams, outlasting her in rallies, sending her scrambling side to side and pinning her behind the baseline with deep, flat groundstrokes into the corners. When Williams ventured toward the net, Sharapova craftily lobbed over her head or angled two-fisted backhands past her.

No one could tell from watching her that Sharapova was also fighting off a sore throat that had her in tears the night before, worrying she might be too sick to play.

Rarely has anyone, even Venus Williams, ever countered Serena's

pace with greater pace and so completely dominated her in a match. Never has anyone this young, playing in her first Grand Slam final, so thoroughly crushed a defending champion as Sharapova did in the 30-minute opening set.

More than 6,000 miles away, her coach, Robert Lansdorp, watched from his home in Torrance, Calif. Lansdorp, 65 and unable to come to Wimbledon this year because of a bad hip, had coached Tracy Austin, turning her into the youngest US Open champion when she won the first of her two titles at 16 in 1979. He also coached Pete Sampras for many years until he

of youth."

Maybe her whole cinematic journey through life toughened her up. Born in Siberia, Sharapova came to the United States from Russia at age 7 with her father, Yuri, who had 700 dollars and a dream of getting her a scholarship to the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Bradenton, Florida. Her mother, Yelena, unable to get a visa, had to stay behind for two years.

Bollettieri's academy was the home of another Russian prodigy, Kournikova, and it had been the tennis boot camp for Andre Agassi, Monica Seles, Jim Courier and others.

ball after ball," Sharapova said.

"I wasn't consistent enough. When I came to Robert, he was like, 'Okay, this girl has to hit ball after ball until this basket is finished.' When I looked in the basket, there were about 1,000 balls in there."

Lansdorp didn't have any fancy gear, just a rented court, and he drilled shots hard and deep to Sharapova.

"I hit the ball with so much pace against her, a foot from the baseline, and she got to the point where pace didn't bother her," Lansdorp said.

"That's what everyone saw today against Serena. She took Serena's pace

Maria to emulate him. She got part of his style down, the raised right foot at the start of the motion, but developed her own effective serve.

Then there was the discussion they all had about whether Sharapova should play left-handed or right-handed. She was generally right-handed, but could serve and hit forehands both ways.

"It was a toss-up, but we decided to settle on her serving and hitting forehands right-handed," Lansdorp said.

"But Maria hit a left-handed passing shot past (Daniela) Hantuchova last week and nobody could believe it. That girl has a lot of talents." Wimbledon may have fallen, but its does not end there for the new star of women's tennis. She now wants the world.

"I thought Wimbledon was just my dream to win, and, of course, my goal now is to be No. 1 in the world."

Saturday's stunning triumph will hoist her further toward that ambition as she is projected to break into the top 10 in the world for the first time at No. 9.

Ahead of her will be three compatriots, two Belgians, two Americans and a French woman, but close behind will be Serena and her older sister Venus.

It's a tall order but Sharapova is on the way up.

For Williams it is back to the drawing board, she says.

"I'm definitely going to triple my efforts, and do everything I can to play better next time."

"And going into the summer, I think it will be fun because I have a great chance on the hard courts. I just love playing on that surface."

But before the US circuit and Flushing Meadow, most of the top women will head for Athens and the Olympic tournament where Venus Williams will be the defending champion.

Oddly, Sharapova will miss Greece as she was only the sixth-ranked Russian when the Olympic qualification deadline passed on June 14.

And she will all too surely be aware that two of those ahead of her were last month's French Open champion Anastasia Myskina and the woman she beat in the Paris final, Elena Dementieva, both of whom suffered early exits at Wimbledon.

It's all evidence that things are moving in the hierarchy of women's tennis and may take a while before the dust settles.



DADDY'S GIRL: New Wimbledon ladies' champion Maria Sharapova of Russia poses with father Yuri just hours after stunning defending champion Serena Williams on Saturday.

was 20, as well as Lindsay Davenport.

"Maria has the same composure, the same determination as Tracy," Lansdorp said by telephone. "Like all the great champions, Maria has no fear."

Boris Becker, who also won his first Wimbledon at 17, summed up what he thought made Sharapova a champion: "Nerves of steel or the innocence

Sharapova didn't get in right away. When she did, she had to endure a couple of unhappy years living in a dorm with much older girls before she was reunited with her family.

She slugged away, and then, at age 10, began going for two-week training trips in California with Lansdorp.

"I wasn't the kind of person that wanted to practice and hit ball after

and hit it back even harder. I didn't think she'd win Wimbledon at this age, but I knew she had the heart and mind of a champion. She knows how to play almost by instinct."

Lansdorp said Sharapova's father is "a pretty smart cookie" when it comes to tennis. He came to practice one day with photos of Sampras' serve and asked Lansdorp if he could teach

Pakistan edge India to third

Hockey

AFP, Amsterdam

Pakistan came from 2-3 down to win 5-3 over India and take bronze in the men's 4-Nations field hockey tournament here Saturday.

In a titanic struggle with the lead changing three times, India played above the level of their other performances here to shake off Pakistan's early 1-0 advantage and head Pakistan 3-2 in the middle of the second half.

Pakistan came back with three goals in the last 13 minutes to secure the win. Pakistan had crushed India 6-1 on Wednesday in a group match.

Pakistan's conversion rate made the difference to the scoreline as India had five penalty corner chances and Pakistan six.

For Pakistan, Sohail Abbas converted two penalty corners with clean shots, Kashif Jawad and Rehan Butt took rebounds off Adrian D'Souza in India's

goal and Butt chimed in with a field goal two minutes from time.

For India, Dilip Tirkey converted one penalty corner and Baljit Dhillon Singh and Gagan Ajit Singh contributed field goals.

Rajinder Singh, India's coach, said his team played well.

"The boys did well although we missed some penalty corner chances and we have to work more and more on the short corners," Rajindersaid.

Rajinder believes the team will improve from the experiences in this tournament.

"The boys are now in the rhythm and the boys are comfortable with the way they played and they tried to win the game, but missed the short corners," Rajindersaid.

Roelant Oltmans, Pakistan's coach, heaped praise on Sohail Abbas who reached 200 games for Pakistan last Thursday.

"Originally he was a penalty corner specialist and now more and more Sohail is coaching the other players and is one of the key communicators in the

team," Oltmans said.

"Sohail is eager to learn and has a great approach to training because he wants to learn something from every training session to become a better player."

Oltmans was concerned with the inconsistent play of his team in the lead up to Athens.

"We did not play a consistent tournament. In the first match against India and for 20 minutes of the second half against Netherlands we played very well," Oltmans said.

"If we can play a consistent tournament in Athens at 80 per cent of our capacity all the time we will win through to the semi-finals," Oltmans predicted.

"If we do not make the semi-finals in Athens it will not be because the boys did not do their best. It will be because other teams are better and we will have to accept that. If we score five goals in each match in Athens we will reach the semi-finals."

The final of the men's tournament is between Netherlands and Germany on Sunday.

Imran plans

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"She (Jemima) did everything, but sometimes you do things and do not succeed," he said, admitting that his passion for Pakistani politics and deepening commitment to public life might have made it more difficult for Jemima to settle down."

Imran also said the decision to part way with Jemima was not an easy one.

"Splitting up is something that has a huge impact on your life. Especially because of the children, it is not easy at all. Well, the whole family split, you see. It is a big decision and it is not an easy decision at all."

Imran who won a World Health Organisation award last year for establishing a cancer hospital in Lahore, plans to set up another cancer hospital in the southern city of Karachi.

"One really cannot cope with cancer in Pakistan and we need to have more such centres across the country," he said.

Other projects on hand include setting up a university in his home town of Mianwali, from where he was elected as MP in October 2002, and achieving political change.

Wright ready

FROM PAGE 13

of an ankle injury, went into the 90s with a pick-up six off Butler and a single off Oram took him to a hundred in 118 balls with two sixes and 10 fours.

Paul Collingwood chipped in with a useful run-a-ball 20, helping Flintoff add 50 in 43 balls.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the England innings against New Zealand in the NatWest Series one-day international in Bristol on Sunday:

England
Trescothick run out 1
Vaughan c Harris b Oram 12
Key c Hopkins b Styris 18
Strauss c Astle b Butler 61
Flintoff b Butler 106
C'wood c Hopkins b Oram 20
Jones not out 1
Mahmood c Oram b Butler 17
Extras: (b-1, lb-2, w-9, nb-5) 237
Total: (For 7 wickets in 50 overs) 237
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-35, 3-57, 4-179, 5-229, 6-235
Did not bat: Gough, Harmison, Anderson

Bowler O M R W
Oram 10 3 27 2
Franklin 8 0 53 0
Butler 10 0 57 3
Styris 9 0 34 1
Harris 8 0 37 0
Vettori 5 0 26 0

NEW ZEALAND: Fleming, Astle, Marshall, Styris, McMillan, Oram, Harris, Butler, Hopkins, Vettori, Franklin.
Toss: New Zealand.

Everywhere in Goa, people were engaged in animated discussions about the prospects of Luiz Felipe Scolari's side, but most were confident they would win.

"It will be a big final," said fan Gilberto Rodrigues. "Portugal have played really well, fast football, but Greece have shown so far they are good at blocking that rhythm."

Super Series down under?

CRICINFO, undated

Australia will host next year's first International Cricket Council Super Series, consisting of a Test and a best-of-three one-day series between Australia and a Rest of the World team.

Press Trust of India has on Sunday reported that the series would be held in October 2005, and according to SK Nair, secretary of the Indian board who attended the ICC's recent annual meeting, the itinerary had been confirmed.

"The itinerary for the series has been approved by ICC."

While the ICC have made no formal announcement about Australia hosting the series, Nair's comments have gone against the gist of the mill, as India and South Africa were in strong contention to host the series.

Initially, the Super Series plan received mixed responses. The ICC had been criticised, for the series would further jam an already crowded international schedule. But it has also been commended, for it pits the world's best against one another.

Flintoff powers

FROM PAGE 13

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WISH ME LUCK: Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar waves to the fans as he leaves his house in Islamabad yesterday to join the national team's training camp in Lahore.

Shoaib-up Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

A fired up Shoaib Akhtar is expected to give Pakistan a boost in this month's Asia Cup, as the express pacer returned home Sunday saying all that happened in the series against India was behind him.

"I am always there to play for my country and have left all that happened in the India series behind me," Akhtar told AFP on his return from London.

Akhtar will report to Pakistan's new coach Bob Woolmer on Sunday and said he is fired up to play a lead role in the Asia Cup, which is scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka from July 16-August 1.

Rivals India, hosts Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong are featuring in the event, last held in 2000 and was won by Pakistan.

"The last two months were full of mental stress but through the well wishes of my family, fans and supporters I have come over all the problems," said Akhtar, who earlier

said he was not mentally ready to play.

"I am duty-bound to play for my country but it was a tough decision after all the mental stress I had to go through."

Akhtar's participation in Pakistan's warm up camp, which started last week, remained a mystery as he was going through rehabilitation after injuring his rib cage in the home series against India in April this year.

He appeared for Durham county in the English season but played with breaks to allow the injury to fully heal.

His injury -- which came in the decisive Rawalpindi Test of the series which Pakistan lost to India -- was seen as suspicious and was examined by a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) medical commission.

The PCB let him off with a warning saying the tests conducted remained inconclusive.

"I was really hurt, my integrity and commitment to the team and country was questioned but it was proved in tests in England that I was injured."

"I have never been short on

commitment and will prove this in the coming Asia Cup," said Akhtar, known as the Rawalpindi Express for his pace.

"People alleged that I play country for money but I am returning home for national duty and do not care about financial losses."

The 28-year-old Akhtar, who has 125 wickets in 32 Tests and 167 in 103 one-dayers, has bowled over 100 miles per hour on two occasions.

The only other bowler to match Akhtar's 100 mile per hour feat in the history of the game is countryman Mohammad Sami.

Woolmer, who played for England but coached South Africa, warned Akhtar must attend the camp for a chance to play for Pakistan.

"There is no secret that Akhtar has a difference of opinion with the PCB but if Akhtar wants to play for Pakistan he has to be here and join the bus. That is the bottom line," Woolmer said Saturday, the day he took charge as coach.

Pakistan's squad for the Asia Cup is due to be announced on Wednesday.

New Zealand near final

Cricket

AFP, Cardiff

New Zealand all but booked themselves a place in the NatWest Series final with a five-wicket win against the West Indies at Sophia Gardens here on Saturday.

Only a freak combination of results can now deny Stephen Fleming's men a place in the July 10 Lord's showpiece of this one-day international triangular event and they will qualify Sunday if they beat England at Bristol.

Chasing 217, New Zealand won with four overs to spare thanks to an unobtrusive 75 not out from Hamish Marshall, the 25-year-old man-of-the-match's sixth fifty in 19 one-day internationals.

Marshall faced 119 balls with just three fours. Chris Cairns ended the match when he hit his first ball, from Jermine Lawson, for four.

The Black Caps' victory continued a pattern which had seen all completed matches in the series won by the team batting second.

West Indies, who lost the toss, appeared to be bucking the trend at 180 for three in the 37th over.

But good bowling allied to naive batting saw them lose their last seven wickets for 36 runs in 60 balls despite half-centuries from captain Brian Lara (58), who promoted himself to the top of the order, and Ramnaresh Sarwan (54).

Experienced seam bowler Cairns (three for 29) and series debutant Ian Butler (three for 41) led the Kiwi attack.

West Indies conceded 35 extras, including 25 wides.

The tone for New Zealand's reply was set first ball when Lawson's no ball was square-cut for four by New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming.

However, on 45, Fleming's mis-cued pull saw him caught and bowled by Dwayne Bravo.

Medium-pacer Bravo, the competition's leading wicket-taker, then had his eighth dismissal of the tournament when Craig McMillan (22) was brilliantly caught right-handed by a diving Lara at mid-off.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the NatWest Series

one-day international between New Zealand and the West Indies at Sophia Gardens on Saturday:

WEST INDIES: 216 all out in 46.2 overs (Lara 58, Sarwan 54, Gayle 27; Cairns 3-29, Butler 3-41)

NEW ZEALAND
Fleming c and b Bravo 45
Astle c Paul b Lawson 19
Marshall not out 75
Styris b Bravo 3
McMillan c Lara b Bravo 22
Oram c Gayle b Lawson 17
Cairns not out 4
Extras: (lb-5, w-25, nb-5) 35
Total: (For 5 wickets in 46 overs) 220
Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-114, 3-121, 4-176, 5-216
Did not bat: Hopkins, Vettori, Butler, Franklin

Bowler O M R W
Lawson 10 1 56 2
Bradshaw 10 1 34 0
Best 8 0 48 0
Bravo 8 0 36 3
Smith 7 0 30 0
Gayle 3 0 11 0
Result: New Zealand won by 5 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Hamish Marshall.

Record-breaking
FROM PAGE 13
was confident about today," said Woodbridge.

"I am just really pleased. I felt I played one of the best matches I have played today. For me Wimbledon is the greatest tennis event that we play."

"It was my dream just to play here, so to say that I have won more than anyone in the history of tennis I am so proud of what I have done."

Bjorkman paid tribute to his partner calling him the greatest doubles player ever in tennis.

"If you break all the records that you can break, that proves that you are the greatest," said the Swede.

"John McEnroe was a fantastic doubles player, but Todd broke his records as well. He doesn't have the hardest shots, but he is a shot-maker and that's what counts in doubles."

Asked about his intentions for the future, Woodbridge said he felt his game was good enough to keep going.

"I should keep playing because you are retired a long time," he said.

Boost from

FROM PAGE 13

young abandon violence and come together draped in the Greek flag."

Since the 1-0 semi-final victory over the Czech Republic last Thursday thousands of Greeks have gone out and bought national flags to adorn their balconies and attach to their cars.

Such has been the demand that the Prefect of the Province of Salonika has handed out free flags after shops ran out of them.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP
V X S F X K Y R M T P Y H V
U R Q W Y K T N Q K S M V I S Q N
W Y I R H Y P H Y W R P Y M R I F
H V G K X Q W Y K U T M G Y K Q
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A GROUP OF PRAGUE CITIZENS ARE SECRETLY CONCEALED, ARE THEY CACHED ZECHS?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals R
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.