



Off-court interests include fashion, singing, jazz dancing and movies (favorite is Pearl Harbor)

Featured as On the Move by People Magazine in its September 1, 2003, issue

In second year of high school and studies via an internet school

Enjoys reading books in the Sherlock Holmes and Pippi Longstocking series

Favors Russian music and food, Russian food (except for Italian bread)

Says favorite dessert is 'anything.'

Tennis star Maria Sharapova has been referred to as the next Anna Kournikova. She's Russian, blonde and quite the looker. So what sets her apart from everyone's favorite calendar girl? She can actually win, complete with stunningly long legs that complement her six-foot-tall stature and an impressive grunt that has gained her plenty of its own recognition. Maria has been called the "Queen of Grunts" and the "Siberian Siren," among a slew of other creative nicknames that low-life commentators have time to make up. With a recent win at Wimbledon and a series of money-spinning deals with Nike, NEC and Prince, Maria has already been prepared for the life of a sports celebrity.

Born in Nyagan, a small Siberian town in Russia, Maria was introduced to the father of tennis pro Yevgeny Kafelnikov and given her very first racket at the age of three. As soon as she hit a few balls, Maria became obsessed with the sport and quickly enrolled in a tennis clinic at six. When tennis pro Martina Navratilova discovered the raw talent of the youngster, she went to Maria's father to recommend that she study at the world-renowned Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Florida. Only a year later, Maria and her father went to Florida with no understanding of English and little money, but the sports management company IMG agreed to sponsor Maria's \$35,000/year tuition.

In 2001, the young star joined the junior circuit, and in her first two seasons won 51 matches and lost only six, coming away with six titles. After ranking 186th on the WTA charts with a professional loss to Monica Seles, Maria joined the big leagues and surprised skeptical players with an impressive 34-11 record. By the end of 2003, Maria had won two pro titles (the Quebec City and Japan Open) and two doubles titles with Tamarine Tanasugarn, moving her way up the ranks to 32. With a consistent winning record under her belt and her beautiful face being splashed on magazine covers across the globe, Maria should have no problem settling in to her new role as a celebrity.

Latest Buzz

After winning the 2004 Wimbledon championship over top-ranked Serena Williams in straight sets, Maria has become the new star of the court, finally putting a stop to an image that has become closely compared to fellow Ruskie, Anna K.

Maria Says

On her image:

"I've always just wanted to be me and people can say whatever they want to say."

On her skills:

"I think I pretty much shut everyone up after I won at Tokyo."

On the inevitable comparisons to Anna K:

"I am Maria Sharapova and not anyone else."

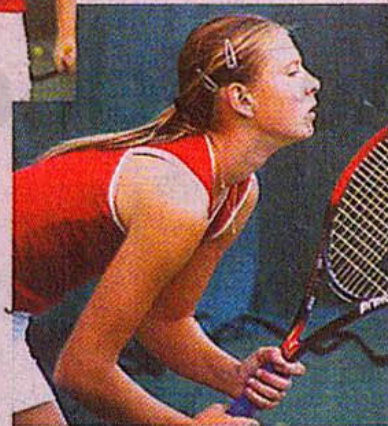
On winning Wimbledon:

"It's amazing really, I'm absolutely speechless. It's always been my dream to come here and win but it was never in my mind that I would do it this year. When I came off court and saw my name on that board with all the champions, that was when I realized what I'd done. I thought I was going to get sick and I was in tears. I didn't think I'd be ready to go out and win. I did not think about it being a final, I didn't think who I was playing, I was just concentrating on my own game. I don't know how I won. I don't know what the tactics were. I just didn't care what was going on around me -- I was in my own little world. I just told myself the power was in me and if I put my mind to do something, I can do it."

Sports Stars Exhibit

Today's Profile Maria Sharapova

Nationality: Russia, **Residence:** Bradenton, Florida, USA,
Birthdate: April 19, 1987, **Birthplace:** Nyagan, Russia (Siberian Region)
Height: 6' (1.83 m), **Weight:** 130 lbs. (59 kg),
Plays: Right-handed, **Status:** Unknown.



Sports watch

HELLO people! I cannot believe that we are already five years into our new millennium. But it is true, 2005 is upon us already, and the years seem to be sneaking up on you just when you are not looking.

I hope all of you have new resolutions and fresh new outlooks. 2005 looks like being an outstanding sports year with a number of real highlights on show as the year progresses.

January, on its own creates a huge first impression and will leave the viewers pining for more sports action. I will try to highlight the biggest events taking place in the month of January in the most common genres of sports.

Starting with the ever-popular cricket. January will be a month of scintillating cricket action. The VB series, formerly known as the World Series, kicks off Down Under from the 14th

of January with giants Australia clashing with the volatile but extremely talented West Indies and Pakistan. Brian Lara and his counterpart Inzamam-ul-Haque have a steep task in their hands as they aim to stop the Aussie juggernaut.

Also on show, will be the Barmy Army locking horns with the Proteas in what is shaping up to be an intensely competitive Test series. With the series tied at one all, the fourth and fifth Tests starting from the 13th and 21st of January respectively looks likely to be a treat.

In our very own desh, we can look forward to the visit of the Zimbabwe team to play in the one day games. After an outstanding performance in the first Test where they pulled off their maiden Test victory, Bangladesh will be looking for more of the same in the second Test and the one days that follow. It's all set to be an absorbing series.

Moving on to football, January sees exhi-

lating football action all over the world. The European leagues resume after their winter hiatus with the top teams all regenerated and ready to fire on all cylinders.

Skimming through the fixture lists, the one that stands out is the Liverpool Manchester United game on the 15th of January. Liverpool have strengthened their team with the addition of ex-Madridista Fernando Morientes and he will probably make his debut in the match. Historically perhaps the biggest game in English football; this is a mouth-watering tie. Form and results surmounts to nothing when these two clash. Honor is what is at stake.

In the Spanish Premiere the standout game sees Catalan giants Barcelona and their gem Ronaldinho welcome to the Camp Nou, the Galician's from Real Sociedad on the 16th of January.

By Zulquar

The week after that sees high profile EPL action in Highbury where Arsenal and Henry take on the unpredictable Newcastle on the 22nd of January.

For tennis lovers all over, the Australian Open provides fuel for their fires. Starting on the 17th and continuing up to the 30th of January this looks to be a breathtaking opening Grand Slam of the season. With the huge array of talent on show Swiss Roger Federer will have his work cut out defending the crown that he won last year. As far as the woman's game is concerned, there is little chance of a repeat of last years all Belgian final. The Williams sisters are fit are raring to go and with the Russian revolution threatening to leave all in its wake, the jury is out on who will win the women's competition.

That should just about cover it for now. Seasons Greetings & Happy viewing! Ciao!