

MARTINA NAVRATILOVA

b. 10/18/1956

Navratilova knew from an early age that she wanted to be a tennis player. At 16 she turned pro, and two years later she defected from her native Czechoslovakia to the United States. In 1981 she became an American citizen.

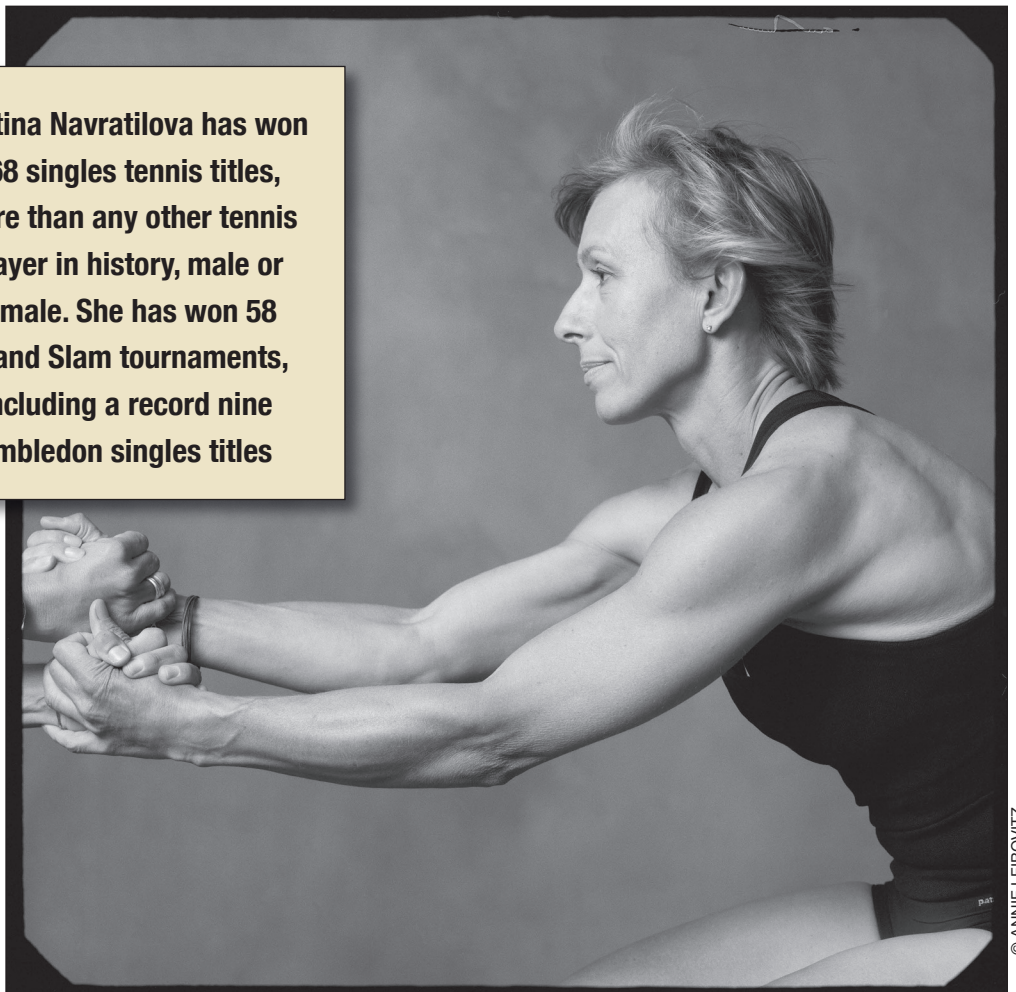
Navratilova played a powerful serve-and-volley style of tennis not yet seen in the women's game. She pioneered a regimen of diet and cross training for physical conditioning. Navratilova's friend and former on-court rival Chris Evert said: "Martina revolutionized the game by her superb athleticism and aggressiveness, not to mention her outspokenness and her candor. She brought athleticism to a whole new level with her training techniques. ... She had everything down to a science, including her diet, and that was an inspiration to me."

In 1981, Navratilova became the first athletic superstar to announce her sexual orientation. Although her candor cost her millions in endorsement opportunities, her 1982 tournament winnings alone made her the first female athlete to earn more than \$1 million in a year.

Navratilova retired from women's singles tennis in 1994, but continued as a mixed doubles player until 2006, winning a total of 175 doubles titles in her career. She has earned a reputation as an advocate of gay rights, the environment, animal welfare and women's issues. She spoke at the 1993 March on Washington and filed a lawsuit against the enactment of Colorado's Amendment 2, which banned legal protection for lesbians and gays in housing and employment.

In praise of Navratilova, TV analyst Bud Collins said: "Martina is probably the most daring player in the history of the game. She dared to play a style antithetical to her heritage without worrying about making a fool of herself. She dared to remake herself physically, setting new horizons for women in sports. And she dared to live her life as she chose, without worrying what other people thought of her."

Martina Navratilova has won 168 singles tennis titles, more than any other tennis player in history, male or female. She has won 58 Grand Slam tournaments, including a record nine Wimbledon singles titles



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