

Navratilova, Martina (1956-)

Encyclopedia Article

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Navratilova, Martina (1956—)

With her unrivaled athleticism, aggressive style, and emotional intensity, Martina Navratilova transformed women's tennis into a power sport. Born and raised in Prague, Navratilova became the Czech national champion at fifteen. In 1975, as an eighteen-year-old, Navratilova made international headlines when she defected to the United States. She quickly became one of the top players in the world. But it wasn't until she radically changed her appearance and style of play—becoming the most physically fit and athletically aggressive woman on the tour—that she began to dominate the sport. A multiple winner of the four major tournaments, Navratilova reigned at Wimbledon, winning nine singles and six doubles championships. By the end of her career, she had won more single titles than any other tennis player, male or female. At the peak of her success, through a naïve belief in "American honesty," she shocked the world by coming out as a lesbian. She is considered by many to be the greatest woman tennis player of all time.

Further Reading:

Blue, Adrienne. *Martina: The Life and Times of Martina Navratilova*. New York, Birch Lane Press, 1995.

Bunsch, Iris. *Three Female Myths of the 20th Century: Garbo, Callas, Navratilova*. New York, Vantage, 1991.

Navratilova, Martina, with George Vecsey. *Martina*. New York, Knopf, 1985.