

Evert disappoints

Austin impressive in Canadian Open debut

The Canadian Open Tennis Championships have finally come of age.

The 1981 edition of the Open, which brought only the women's half of the pro circuit to the National Tennis Centre, had it all: big name stars, top prize money, plenty of emotional outbursts, fashionably poor officiating, and even a death threat.

The reigning queen of women's tennis and defending Canadian Open champion, Chris Evert-Lloyd, headed the most impressive field ever brought together for a Canadian professional tennis tournament.

Among the many top-ranked players challenging the number one seed Evert-Lloyd for her title,

were Tracy Austin, Andrea Jaeger and Martina Navratilova, seeded two, three, and four respectively.

Unlike the men's Canadian Open played in Montreal, where the top seeds fell by the wayside in the early rounds, the Ladies' Open offered very few surprises. At the completion of the early rounds of play, all but one of the top eight seeds had advanced to the quarter finals. Number seven seed Wendy Turnbull was upset in a third round match by South Africa's Rosalyn Fairbank, ranked number fifty-four on the Women's Tennis Association computer.

As expected, the top two seeds, Evert-Lloyd and Austin, easily made their way to the championship game to battle it out for the tournament title and the \$34,000.00 paycheck.

What wasn't expected was Austin's lopsided 6-1, 6-4 victory over an uninspired Evert-Lloyd. The latter, who has been called the most consistent player in the game, made an uncharacteristic number of unforced errors throughout the match.



Chris Evert-Lloyd strains during action at the Canadian Open Tennis Championships. Lloyd lost her title to an eager Tracy Austin.

The rumors following the match were that Evert-Lloyd was thrown off her game by a serious threat made on her life the previous afternoon.

She refused to comment on the death threat and attributed her loss to Austin to a lack of desire.

"It's a matter of eagerness. I felt I had nothing left out there. I have to be 100% on top of my game to beat Tracy. She just wanted this one a little more than I did."

Austin, who earlier this year was forced into a six-month lay-off because of a lower back injury, was visibly delighted with her victory.

"I've had to work very hard, both mentally and physically, to come back after my injury. I'm very glad about this win because now I feel I'm totally back."

Although the Canadian Open has by no means the importance nor prestige of a Wimbledon or a U.S. Open championship, it is now, nevertheless, considered one of the major stops on the women's tour. Consequently, as in any major tournament, tension runs high giving way to frequent emotional outbursts. One might say that this year's Open had just enough of these to add that little extra zip that fans seem to love. In most instances, the cause of the players' flare-up was, of course, the officiating. The most memorable of such incidents was the quarter final confrontation between Tracy Austin and nineteen-year-old Pam Shriver, the tournament's eighth seed. This was unquest-

ionably the most heated match of the tournament.

Shriver, a hot-tempered player, had lost the first set 2-6. In the second set, she was continually thwarted in her efforts to get back into the match by the umpire, who on quite a number of occasions, overruled the lineperson's calls in Austin's favour. At one point in the match Shriver refused to go on playing unless the tournament referee was brought in to discuss yet another over-rule by the umpire.

Shriver went onto lose the match and as the two players approached the net for the traditional hand shake, she hurled a few choice words at Austin, who dropped her racket to the ground and stared in disbelief at her opponent before going to her chair where she broke down in tears.

Later, during the post match interview, Austin refused to repeat what Shriver had said to her claiming, "I don't use that kind of language, but I can tell you that one sentence started with 'You're a piece of...'" and she used a few words that started with F."

In her own defence, Shriver claimed that Austin shouldn't have been quite so jubilant at the conclusion of the match because it had not been such a great match.

"That second set was a total shambles because of the officiating. You shouldn't throw your arms up in the air after a match like that. It was a joke."

Chris Evert-Lloyd, who at the age twenty-six is considered an old timer on the tour, was asked if perhaps the younger players over-react a bit too much to close calls. She replied, "It's so competitive now, what with the computer rankings being so important, that all the girls are very tense. Everyone wants to do well."

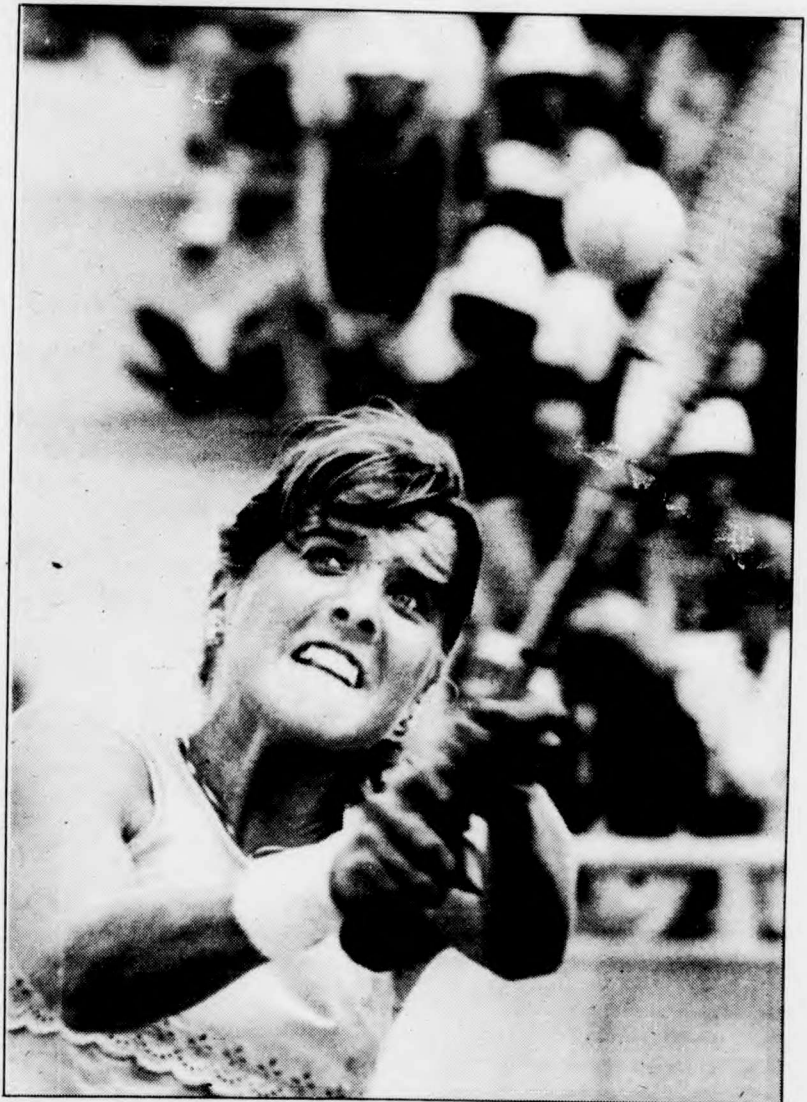
All the outbursts witnessed at the Canadian Open, as well as in other tournaments, perhaps are proof that the ever increasing number of teenagers on the circuit can't handle the pressure of professional tennis as well as they can handle their rackets.

All the Canadian entries gave the home-town crowd very little to cheer about.

Of the four Canadian women entered in the main draw, not one made it past the first round.

Canada's biggest hope was veteran Marjorie Blackwood of Ottawa. She was ranked forty-eighth on the WTA computer, whereas her opponent, Rosalyn Fairbank was ranked fifty-fourth. Fairbank, however, turned out to be the surprise of the tournament by being the only unseeded player to go as far as the quarter finals.

The country's national champion, Victoria's Nina



Playing with new found aggressiveness, eighteen-year-old Tracy Austin earned \$34,000.00 en route to becoming the new Canadian Open champion. She defeated defending champion Chris Evert-Lloyd 6-1, 6-4.

Bland, was defeated by South Korea's Duk Hee Lee. Lee later went on to upset ninth-seed Virginia Ruzici. Carol Bertrand and Angela Walker were the other two Canadians who packed their bags after the first round.

Thirteen-year-old sensation Carling Bassett of Don Mills, daughter of Johnny F. Bassett, is considered by many as Canada's brightest prospect to make it to the top ranks of big league tennis. Playing in her first professional tournament, her lack of competitive experience was evident when she lost in straight sets in the qualifying rounds to Czechoslovakian Yvone Bzrakova.

Bassett was joined in defeat by her fellow countrywomen Jill Heatherington of Brampton and

Helene Pelletier of Quebec City.

Even before this tournament began, there was much criticism concerning the new structure, which this year had the men's tour stop in Montreal and the women's here in Toronto. Many skeptics claimed that the Canadian Open Ladies' Championships would fail dismally, simply because people don't want to watch women's tennis. However, judging from attendance figures, which exceeded by a few thousand those predicted by Tennis Canada, this tournament wasn't a flop.

If one could only forget Rill Foods' horribly stale popcorn, warm beer and outrageous prices, one could say that the 1981 Canadian Open was a total success.

Text by Rose Crawford

Photography by

Gary Hershorn