

EVENING TIMES OF GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

By Chick Young, Sports Writer

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SERVICE WITH A SMILE – THE LADY THAT CAN GET ANYONE FOR TENNIS

John McEnroe and Ivan Lendl playing tennis in Scotland is the sporting equivalent of Vincent Van Gogh emulsifying the front room. However straight from the you'd better believe it department, McEnroe, Lendl, Henri LeConte and Andres Gomez will play in the Bank of Scotland sponsored Grasscourt Championships at Edinburgh's Craiglockhart between June 6 and 14.

Incredibly the tournament entry list now boasts four of the world's top ten men and two of the world's top ten ladies, for Gabriela Sabatini and Zina Garrison will also compete. It is a feast of action for quality-starved Scotland and already the Saturday semi-finals and Sunday finals are a sell-out, which means maximum attendances of 3,231.

"Everything is wonderful," says promoter Karen Scott, an Australian lady charged with the task of doing for Scottish tennis what Crocodile Dundee did for the outback. She is succeeding too, and in astonishing fashion. Karen's company, ProServ, have been working a marriage with Edinburgh District Council. The honeymoon takes place in the unlikely setting of Craiglockhart. "I don't see why top-notch tennis shouldn't come to Scotland," says the 38-year-old executive who first tasted the promotions side of the industry when she came to Britain as Miss Australian Tennis in 1970.

ACHIEVED

ProServ is an international player management and tournament promotions company which also works in the sporting world out with tennis and she is the managing director. "It is not a joke that the tourney should be played here," she said. And certainly they aren't laughing at the Queen's Club, venue of the traditional Wimbledon warm-up. What the lady from Down Under has achieved for Scottish tennis really does take some grasping. She says: "We have been accepted in Scotland beyond my wildest dreams. I know about the sports you really love here, football, rugby and golf, but I know that Scots love seeing the best in sport. We are bringing the best to Edinburgh. Ticket inquiries have come in from all over the country and there is no reason why this cannot go on and on. And look what it is doing for the Scottish game. Local players WILL play against the big names."

These big names will include John McEnroe, despite his recent wanderings from the straight and narrow. Curiously enough, deterioration in the Brat's self-control usually coincides with a direct increase in demand for tickets.

ProServ has certainly fired an ace down the throat of the Queen's Club, helped by the fact Ivan Lendl is one of their clients and that John McEnroe's diplomacy went down like vinegar on strawberries at the snooty pre-Wimbledon tournament. McEnroe isn't exactly globally adored for his tantrums, but when ProServ asked "Anyone-for-menace?", the Scottish Lawn Tennis

Association served a volley of enthusiasm.

Karen Scott was their match in that department. She brought them not only McEnroe and Lendl, but also Henri Leconte 1986 French Open and Wimbledon semi-finalist.

And Andres Gomez, the man who defeated Boris Becker and Yannick Noah in New York's Tournament of Champions earlier this month.

Says Karen: "Scottish tennis has been suffocated by what happens in England, but that is about to change. You need your local heroes, and players here can only improve by meeting the world's great names."

Divorcee Karen can boast to be the only woman in the world to run a Grand Slam tournament - the Australian Open - but she gave that up to open the Down Under branch of ProServ. Now the lady, who goes about her day's business on turbo-charge, has injected life into Scottish tennis, a breed of sport in this country previously comatose. She is doing it with a touch of class, too.

The only way left to catch the semi-final and final day action at Craiglockhart is to purchase one of the 30 courtside boxes, which seat six. That will set you - or your company - back £425, but only a few of them are still available.