



The Website of Maria Bueno, Tennis Champion



2013 NEWS



GALA NIGHT FOR BRAZILIAN OLYMPICS, Sao Paulo 18 December 2013

Maria attended a gala evening hosted by the Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB) in Sao Paulo on Tuesday evening at which the achievements of Brazilian sport were celebrated by the presentation of several awards.

Held in Rio de Janeiro last year, the Brazil Olympic Awards returned to Sao Paulo, the venue of the first ceremony held there in 1999.

This year's gala evening was the 15th edition of the awards, and began the journey towards the 2016 Olympics to be held in Rio de Janeiro.

It also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Pan American Games held in the city of São Paulo in 1963.

It was a remarkable moment for the participants of those Games when Brazil came second overall in the medal table, behind only the United States.



More than 90 former athletes, who were part of the Brazilian delegation to that competition, took to the stage at the Theatre Bourbon Shopping in Sao Paulo and were applauded by the current generation of competitors and given a standing ovation by the whole audience.

The group represented the best of Brazilian sport at that time, winning 52 medals in all, at home, (14 gold, 20 silver and 18 bronze), and was led by tennis legend Maria Esther Bueno, who acted as the athletes' spokesperson during the tribute.

Earlier in the ceremony, the COB had paid tribute to the medals won at the 1963 Pan American Games, a feat considered to be a milestone in the history of the national sport.

Maria, the most successful Brazilian tennis player of all time and winner of 19 Grand Slam tournaments, together former football player Carlos Alberto Torres, received a plaque on behalf of the 1963 generation of athletes.

"Today we celebrate a number 50s: 50 years of the Pan American Games in Sao Paulo, 50 years of Universiade Porto Alegre, and 50 years of the world basketball championship in Brazil and the 30-year gold medal Brazilian volleyball at the Pan American Games," said the President of the Brazilian Olympic Committee, Carlos Arthur Nuzman.

Among the former athletes attending the gala, all of whom won medals at the Pan Am Games, were Thomaz Koch, the first Brazilian male tennis player to win a Grand Slam tournament, the mixed doubles title at Roland Garros in 1975; Amaury Passos, world champion in basketball in 1959 and 1963, and Torres, the captain of the three-times world champion football team in 1970.

"I wanted to thank everyone for the opportunity to be here receiving this honour and representing all of the Brazilian delegation that contested the 1963 Pan American Games," said Maria Esther, who won three medals (gold in the singles, and silver in both the women's doubles and the mixed doubles events) at the Pan American Games.



"It is a great honour. I feel like a bit of an outsider here because I could not participate in the Olympic Games, since tennis was not part of the program in my time, but here we are celebrating 50 years of fighting for the sport so, who do I ask about getting right into 2016?" she joked, bringing applause and laughter, followed by a standing ovation.

"Perhaps, now, after all, I can get the invitation to play in tennis in Rio... what do you think about that?" she added in her closing remarks. "Thank you all!"





The main honouree of the evening was Torben Grael, who received the Adhemar Ferreira da Silva award for being considered a fine example of ethics and professionalism.

"I had a little regret for never having received the award for best Olympic athlete and now it completely vanishes. Adhemar was like a beacon in my career," said Grael, winner of five Olympic medals in sailing and six world titles.

The gala was covered by live by TV Globo and broadcast nationally across Brazil and online.

"I was very pleased to be there and rather humbled by the occasion," Maria said afterwards.

"I did several interviews for both TV Globo and SporTV too and lots of people have since commented on how well everything went so that's good!

"The most thrilling moment was when we all stood on stage to sing the National Anthem together with the two professional signers and the audience... it was really wonderful!"

BACK TO WIMBLEDON, London 6 December 2013

Before taking off for home, Maria attended the Lawn Tennis Writers Association Awards Lunch held at the All England Lawn Tennis Club earlier this week.

It is one of the unique social events in the British tennis calendar, where the elite media mixes with all the movers and shakers in the game, including representatives from Wimbledon, the LTA and TIA UK.

"This was another first for me and I was delighted to accept David Mercer's [LTWA Chairman] invitation to attend," said Maria.

"It was a lovely lunch, but I was a bit surprised, though, when they asked me and Virginia [Wade] to accept their International Award on behalf of Billie Jean [King]!"



"We had a good time recalling how distracting she could be to play, and how she never lost her focus, even if she was talking to the ball kids, or the crowd or whoever.

"It has been much the same for her amazing achievements off the court, as she has championed many different causes, particularly for women's sports.

"Billie Jean always believed in herself and she has had the confidence to work and win in all her battles, both on and off the court.

"We played doubles together at Wimbledon one year and we weren't doing too well, going down a set and some games, but she just said 'don't worry, we're going to win this! Let's go!' That's just the way she is.

"Oh yes, we did win that match, and the championships that year – it was 1965."

The Lawn Tennis Writers' Association was founded more than 60 years ago to further the interests of lawn tennis writers in Great Britain.

Membership is now open to professional writers, broadcasters and photographers in Great Britain, who cover the sport nationally or internationally.

Each year, in December, the association hosts its Awards lunch and this year Andy Murray won the prestigious LTWA Award for Special Services to British Tennis, the first person since 1951 to win this award twice, and in consecutive years.

"It's well deserved," observes Maria. "Andy broke a 77 year wait for a British Wimbledon champion and he has carried the hopes of the nation for years in what must have been unbelievable pressure for him.

"He won the title in some style too, against the world number one, Novak Djokovic, in what was a very difficult match.



"He wasn't at the lunch but had recorded a video interview that was shown and you could see that he is still very emotional about it all!

"His mother, Judy, collected the award for him and there was a surprise in store for everyone when Andy's voice came over the speakers... but it was an amazing young man, who impersonated Andy brilliantly, as well as Rafa [Nadal], [Novak] Djokovic and Andy Roddick!"

The impersonator was Josh Berry, who was spotted on YouTube by Neil Harmon of The Times and had invited him to come along as his guest... check this out: [Click Here](#)

Maria dropped in to Woodfield Grove Tennis Club to cut the ribbon to open their new balcony on Friday, which now provides a wonderful viewing area of the courts.

"It really has been beautifully done and is a huge improvement for the club," she said.

"Although it isn't quite ready, I was asked to do an impromptu photo-shoot with some of the members, who were there playing tennis."

Her last commitment was to drop into Wimbledon again to see how the club is coping with the works that have started as part of its development plan.





"They are working on the clubhouse area so members are using a temporary clubhouse located in the Debentures suite of Centre Court. They've done a beautiful job with it too!"

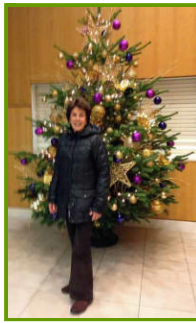
"They also have dug an enormous hole under courts 14 and 15 and are laying the foundations for a new broadcasting restaurant and offices which will all be underground."

"I am told by the time we get to Wimbledon for the Championships next year, we won't know it is all there underneath... amazing really!"

"They also are working on the tunnel between the new transportation hub and the player entrance which runs underneath Somerset Road. Once that's done, it will be blocked off until the whole area around the existing covered courts is redeveloped."

"Wimbledon always does everything so well, you have to admire the way they work between each Championship to get things done and the public don't even know it is happening because by the time the tournament comes round, everything is perfect again!"

This week, of course, is when the senior men players get to play at the Royal Albert Hall in the Statoil Masters.



"It seems to be a wonderful venue for tennis," comments Maria. "From what I've seen, the audience are very close to the action and it's a very popular event."

"I was very pleased to see them observing a minute's silence in honour of Nelson Mandela, who died on Thursday. He was an exceptional human being, who has touched everyone around the world in some way or another."

"It's quite extraordinary that the news of his death came just as the film on his early life was premiering in London."

"All in all, it has been a very different trip for me to England, at this time of year, with lots of new experiences and time to enjoy them. It's been fun!"

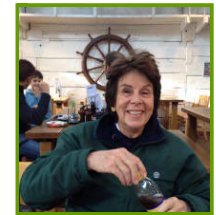
Maria leaves a Britain shivering in winter to return to summer in Brazil.

"I'm told it is very hot in Sao Paulo. It will be quite a contrast, I think!"

TIME FOR A LITTLE SIGHTSEEING, London 30 November 2013

Maria has been taking in some of the sights since her stint at the ATP World Tour Finals in London.

"During the summer, I really don't seem to have much time for seeing the sights so it has been nice to take a couple of weeks before returning home to visit a few places," she told the website.



Among her ports of call, was the Chatham Historic Dockyard, which she found fascinating.

"It's an enormous place on the river where they used to build the big sailing ships for the Royal Navy," Maria said.

"They were actually building submarines there up until around the time I was winning Wimbledon!"

"There's a huge hangar there with an exhibition of the life boats that have been used over the years to rescue people at sea all around the coast of Britain. I couldn't believe the early ones – a rowing boat with a small mast for a sail... unbelievable to think they went out in stormy seas in such a little boat to find people lost at sea."

"The dockyard is like a small city, with workshops, boat slips, dry docks all over the place, plus an elegant house for the admiral (with a tennis court!), offices and barracks. There's even a church."



"Lord Nelson's ship, the Victory, was built there and they still make rope at Chatham."

"It was a fascinating place!"

Chatham is one of the five Medway towns, located in north Kent about 45 minutes from London, which includes Rochester with its magnificent Norman castle, and is famous for Charles Dickens, who lived and worked there.

Maria also had a chance to check out the Tudor castle at Upnor as well as the Fort at Amhurst.

"I have always been interested in history so to get to see some of these places is great!"

It hasn't all been about history, though. Maria visited an unusual wildlife sanctuary called Eagle Heights at Eynsford, also in Kent.

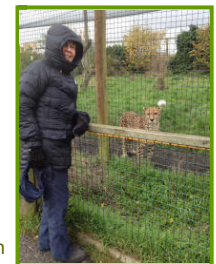


"It was a very cold day but we got to see lots of birds, a cheetah, camel and 26 huskies!" she recalls.

"We also saw an hour-long display of flying birds of prey, which was really fantastic. An eagle almost landed on my head!"

"It took a while for me to warm up at the local pub where we had a marvellous roast beef lunch!"

Maria has also been catching up with friends, including the coaching team at Woodfield Grove tennis Club.





Chairman Peter Risdon took them all out to dinner, which Maria converted into an early Christmas party by providing Santa hats.

"I just thought it was a bit of fun," she said. "The other diners must have thought us a bit early to be celebrating in November but I am off now and won't be around to wish them all Merry Christmas next month!"



BRILLIANT WEEK AT THE O2, London 14 November 2013

Maria has been telling the website about her week at the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals:

"It was an amazing experience for me to be in London for the ATP Finals at the O2," said Maria.

"The organisers have done an incredible job putting on an event that shows tennis at its best in an arena that is really spectacular.

"Watching the top eight best players in the world battle it out to win the ATP Final is something special and the way the whole thing is presented is entirely different to what we are used to at Wimbledon.

"I had the privilege to work with several TV Globo/SporTV crews this week and it was a great experience for me. They all work very hard to get our pieces back to Brazil for transmission and I am grateful to them for being so easy to work with. We had a lot of fun!



"To see Rafa [Nadal] consolidate his number one ranking at the year-end after having watched him win his first tournament after coming back from injury in Sao Paulo was extraordinary.

"He has had an amazing season after all the uncertainties and doubts and thoroughly deserves to be number one.

"It was a shame, perhaps, that he couldn't take the final as well but [Novak] Djokovic played so well that night that I doubt anybody could have beaten him.

"Djokovic had something to prove and is determined to get back the top spot so next year is going to be very interesting as these two extend their rivalry even further.

"I was glad to see Roger [Federer] improve his form as he started to play better in the group matches and even managed to make it into the semi-finals.

"To have two Swiss players in the last four is a fantastic thing for such a small country and you have to admire how well [Stanislav] Wawrinka played to make his place.

"Unfortunately they were both convincingly outplayed in the semis, Federer by Nadal and Wawrinka by Djokovic.

"The semis turned out to be a bit of a let-down after the drama of the group matches, many of which went to three sets and were really close, but the two top players in the world made it through so there could be no complaints!

"The final itself was interesting because it showed how dominant Djokovic can be with his backhand and he kept Rafa pinned at the back of the court looking a bit unbalanced, which is unusual for him.

"Djokovic's serve has become a major weapon too and there seemed to be little that Rafa could do to break his momentum.

"The week set lots of new records apparently, with capacity crowds most sessions and in terms of media interest around the world via television and online streaming.



"Since moving to London in 2009, I am told the eight-day tournament has welcomed 1.28m fans to The O2 arena, which makes it the biggest indoor tournament in the world.

"You can see that the audience is entirely different to the people who go to watch at Wimbledon and that has to be a great thing for the game.

"As I said, the organisers, particularly Andre Silva and Chris Kermode, are to be congratulated for putting on such a great show.

"I am very grateful to them both, as well as to their whole team, for taking such good care of me on my first visit to the ATP Finals. It's been a great week all round!"

This year was the 40th of the ATP rankings and all the No 1s celebrated in style in New York during the US Open. Maria had a chance to catch with them all in the Tennis Family Lounge!

Here are some of the numbers from the ATP World Tour Finals:

- 13,000,000 - number of visitors to ATP digital platforms throughout the tournament
- 6,000,000 - amount of prize money (\$) on offer at this year's event
- 1,923,000 - amount of prize money (\$) won by 2013 champion Novak Djokovic.
- 1,284,685 - number of fans to have come to the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals at The O2 arena since 2009.

410,000 - amount of money raised (£) at the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals Gala, supported by Moët & Chandon, in aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity. More than £1.2m has been raised in the last three years.

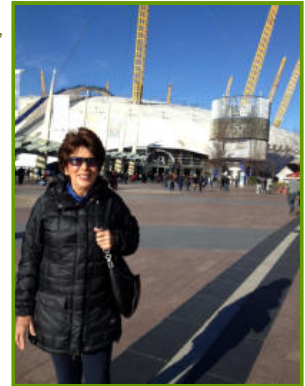
- 403,974 - number of people to pass through The O2 site in 2013, including the non-ticketed Barclays ATP World Tour Finals Fan Zone, practice courts, restaurants and bars, during the eight days of the tournament.
- 261,247 - attendance for this year's tournament.
- 42 - number of hours required to lay down the court following the end of the Jessie J concert prior to the tournament
- 22 - number of consecutive matches Novak Djokovic has won since losing the US Open final in September
- 9 - number of sold out sessions throughout the week (out of 15).

The ATP World Tour Finals was televised by 54 broadcasters in 193 territories and received more than 13 million visitors to its digital platforms via the new responsive-designed tournament website, an increase of 9% on 2012.

The tournament's mobile traffic grew more than 100%, whilst more than half a million people watched Holding Court Live presented by Barclays, the live 90-minute video show, streamed twice-daily from the Fan Zone at The O2.

Live match streaming on TennisTV.com, the ATP's official live streaming site, received more than 4.5 million total streams, an increase of 20%.

For Maria it was so much more than statistics, it was a great new experience.



ATP FINALS, London 7 November 2013

Maria is spending the week at London's O2 Arena where the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals is under way.

"This is my first time at the [men's] finals and it is a very impressive event, quite unlike any of the majors we are used to," she said.

"When I first got here, I couldn't believe just how big the O2 is! It's a massive area under the dome, with the arena itself, a street full of restaurants and a fan zone.

"I am told there are other arenas there for music events and exhibitions, as well as an 11-screen cinema so it is quite an entertainment destination these days and apparently the most successful in the world, eclipsing even Madison Square Garden in New York. Amazing! No wonder the ATP decided to keep the finals here for a few more years.



"They convert the 20,000 seat arena into a tennis stadium for 17,500 spectators and it is very dramatic because the matches are staged like a show, with lights and sound effects. All the signage around the court is electronic and changes on the changeovers."

Maria is working with the SporTV / Globo team again, transmitting feature stories back to Brazil on a daily basis.

"Last year I was in Rio doing the ball-by-ball commentary in the studio off the live feed, never fully realising what a big stage production the ATP Finals are.

"To be here in London, seeing for myself what is happening here, is great and I am really enjoying the experience.

"I was amazed when I first went into the Media Centre last Sunday – it is enormous, with three giant televisions at the front of rows of hundreds of work stations.

"I must congratulate Andre Sa [Tournament Director] and Chris Kermode [Tournament Manager], and their team, for the magnificent event they are running here and the good care they take of the tennis family."

Half way through the round robin event, Maria comments on the tennis itself.

"This has to be the toughest event of them all because the top 8 players in the race come into London after a long season and, this year, four big tournaments that ended in Paris on Sunday.

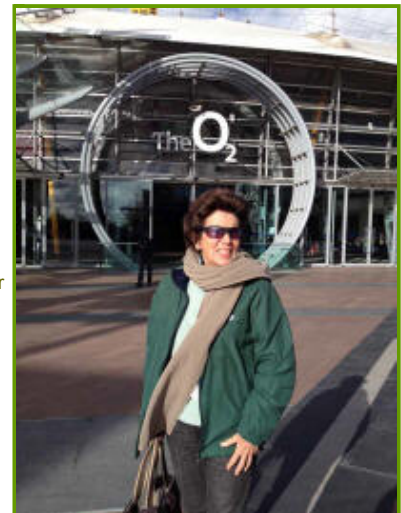
"For some it has been a step too far. [David] Ferrer had a great run reaching the finals in Paris and beating Rafa [Nadal] on the way, but he has very little left for the ATP Finals.

"Novak Djokovic won Paris but had to beat Roger [Federer] and [Juan Martin] Del Potro in some really tight matches there before then taking the Eurostar to London to play them again here within 48 hours! Now that is really tough!



"Every match here is like a final. There are no easy rounds and coming through the round robin section of the draw into the semi-finals is a real fight to the end.

"Roger had to chase points to get here and only made it when he won his first round match in Paris.





"He has had a difficult year, with injuries and a slight loss of form, but his game has really picked up over these past few weeks as he fought to make the Finals, which he has won six times in the past.

"He took sets off Djokovic here and in Paris, in matches he only lost by a narrow margin and will now have to keep fighting to make the semis.

"It can get quite complicated to determine who comes through the round robin groups unless you are Rafa who has won his two matches so far without dropping a set. His place is already secure and he has to be a favourite for the title now.

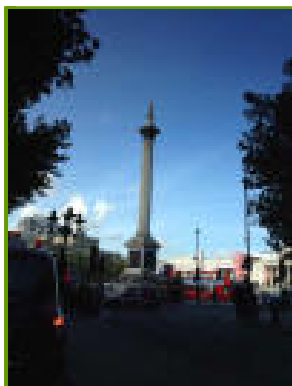
"He has also secured the year-end number one ranking, which Djokovic has been after, so it is already a triumph for Rafa, whatever happens. What a year he has had after coming back from injury and feeling so insecure way back in Sao Paulo.

"As for who else will get to the semis remains to be seen but Djokovic looks good in Group B with Del Potro or Roger, while Rafa probably [Stanislav] Wawrinka from the A group, but who really knows? It comes down to the maths in the end – sets and games won, and so on – so anything can happen.



"One thing is for sure. It makes for a very exciting finish to men's year and I'm delighted to be here to see it!"

London, 27 October 2013



Maria has arrived in London ahead of the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals, which is being held at the O2 Arena in early November.

"It's always good to get here a little early so I get a chance to see people and do a few things before I start getting too busy," Maria explained.

"I haven't been to the ATP Finals before and I hear great things about it so I am looking forward to seeing the event for myself.

"The build-up to the finals is getting really interesting too, with Roger [Federer] in the race for one of the last places in the draw.

"He narrowly missed out winning Basel that would've have clinched it for him so I am hoping he makes it by winning some matches in Paris next week because the finals won't be the same without him!"

Maria has been keeping up with all the tennis leading into the finals, with tournaments played in Basel and Valencia as well as the WTA Championships in Istanbul.

"It's an important period of the year for tennis, with the men indoors and the women playing their season-ending championships.

"Serena won the women's, has ended the year as world number one again and broken the record for the most prize money won in a year for both men and women, which is an extraordinary achievement for her.

"It's clear that the players are very tired after the long season and will thoroughly deserve some rest time before starting again in 2014, although some players, of course, still have Fed Cup and Davis Cup finals to play.

Maria also took the opportunity to visit the theatre last week to see 'Top Hat' in the West End.

"I really enjoyed the show," she said. "Great music and dancing – a real old-fashioned musical and I love the music of Irving Berlin so it was always going to be fun."

Maria also enjoyed the pre-theatre dinner at the Savoy Grill.

"It's such an elegant place, the Savoy, especially after it was fully refurbished last year, I think."

With visits to Nike and the ATP offices, Maria has been touching base also with her various clubs in London, including Queen's, David Lloyd Beckenham and Woodfield Grove Tennis Club in Streatham.

"They got me to draw the winter handicap tournament as well as the 100 Club prizes at Woodfield Grove, which was fun too!"

She's been hitting some balls too – both indoors and out!

"I'm lucky it's still pretty mild here," she remarked. "But it's still quite a contrast to Brazil where it's 30 degrees plus!!"



Sao Paulo, 28 September 2013

Maria returned to Sao Paulo after the US Open and found herself making a raft of personal appearances, including filming for several television features and a visit to the new Nike Brasil headquarters in the city where she gave a speech to staff and visitors.



Her home club, Sociedade Harmonia de Tenis, hosted members of the Rio de Janeiro Country Club with an array of activities for members and guests.

"The Country Club is one of the best in the world, right on Ipanema Beach," said Maria.

"Pedro [her brother] and I used to visit there a lot and he donated a trophy that our two clubs play for every year.

"I went along to help and met a lot of old friends. It was just very sad that Pedro wasn't there this time because everyone missed him."



Maria visited the new offices of Nike Brasil, which by all accounts is quite a place.

"I was amazed at the new offices – very modern and

looking a little like the National Tennis Centre in London with lots of glass and open plan," she said.

"It is a marvellous set up, with a great showroom, and I got the grand tour before I gave a talk for about an hour to the Nike staff and their guests about my career and what it was like to play way back when... they seemed to enjoy it because I was really only asked to talk for about fifteen minutes but they wouldn't let me go!"

Maria's well documented prowess as a 'fashionista' of her day has been called on by TV Globo and she will be co-hosting 'Esporte Espetacular' next Sunday morning, which is a two-hour show.

"The programme is all about the change of uniform for volleyball," explains Maria.

"Our women's team has been wearing the same bathing-suit style of uniform for years and are now changing to clothes that are more like those we wear for tennis.

"There is an obvious parallel with how tennis has changed its dress over the years and I am there to explain how the trends have impacted the sport as well as other sports.

"It was good fun filming the show, which we did at the club last week."



New York, September 2013

The run-up to the finals at the US Open was a hectic period for Maria, who not only provided commentary on matches for SporTV but also found herself reporting for the national evening news on TV Globo, which has a huge audience.

"For me, it was an exciting assignment because I felt I came of age for them [Brazilian TV]," Maria laughed.

"I actually worked one of the men's semi-finals on my own in the [commentary] box so I guess, then, the producer is happy with me now!"

In fact, the reviews on Maria's television delivery have been incredible back in Brazil and she is very pleased with the results.



"People I don't know, as well as some who normally don't say anything, have been coming up to me to say how much they enjoyed the transmissions and what I had to say about the players and the matches.

"I try to give them a different perspective on what is happening, not the obvious, and it seems people like that."



Asked about her views on this year's US Open, Maria responded: "We had fifteen days of amazing tennis, from which we got two great champions, both of whom had to fight for their titles.

"We all thought Serena [Williams] would win because she is the player in top form on the women's tour and no-one except [Victoria] Azarenka can touch her really.

"What was surprising was how hard she fought in the final, not only her opponent but a very strong wind too.

"Her will is exceptional and she doesn't like to lose even a point. She was so very close to losing to Azarenka but she came through to win in the third set tiebreaker - her 17 grand slam and her fourth in New York.

"And it's all the more remarkable because she is 31, about to turn 32!

"As for Rafa [Nadal], what can I say about him?



"When he was in Sao Paulo in February he had so many fears about making a successful comeback after such a serious injury and we talked about it a bit.

"When he won Paris, it was an incredible achievement, really, but he lost in the first round at Wimbledon and took a month off so we wondered if he was in trouble with his knees again.

"He seemed to come back on the hard courts stronger than ever, though, with a bit more aggression to keep the rallies just a little shorter.

"He has made so many successful transitions in his career – learning to play on the grass is just one of them – and he did it again in New York, on hard courts, by winning the US Open against the world number one [Novak Djokovic] in four sets!

"He got off to a bad start against Djokovic but, a little bit like Serena, managed to find a way to win through sheer will power.

"I think Rafa really deserved his victory and I hope we get to see him on the tour for many more years to come because he is very great champion.

"Speaking of great champions, I have to mention Roger [Federer], who lost in New York early which prompted the media to talk about his retirement again.

"Maybe he got a little complacent because he had been playing near-perfect tennis and came out of a five-hour rain delay to meet an in-form Tommy Robredo in a match that was moved from Arthur Ashe Stadium to [Louis] Armstrong [Stadium], where he hadn't played since 2006.

"The two showcourts are very different, both in terms of the atmosphere as well as the view lines and the speed of the surface.

"He clearly wasn't too happy about it, although he didn't complain, but all these things are unsettling and he definitely had an off day, which doesn't mean he isn't capable of producing a good run in the future.

"In true Roger form, he stayed in New York to fulfil all his off-court obligations like the true professional he is. Many would have left town immediately after that."



Once again, weather played a role in proceedings causing some disruption to the schedule of play.

"The finals were already scheduled for the Monday evening, a fifteenth day, but the top players don't like it," said Maria.

"Rafa was particularly vocal about it and so it is a good thing that the USTA is starting construction work on its redevelopment plan for Flushing Meadows that includes a roof over both Ashe and a new Armstrong Stadium by 2016, I think.

"The tournament will go back to playing the men's final on a Sunday from 2015 when the television rights change and, hopefully, they'll then play the semi-finals with a day's break before the final for both the men and the women."

In all the US Open was successful for both the tournament as well as Maria.



BUSY AT THE OPEN, New York, 30 August 2013

As usual, Maria has been busy in New York.

In addition to duties related to her commission with TV Globo / SporTV, she has been fulfilling other media requests.

On Thursday she did a live piece with Tracy Austin and Brett Haber on The Tennis Channel, which was incredibly well received.

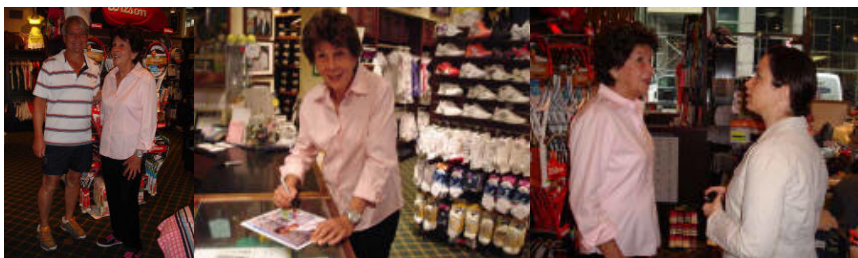
Here is a link to the interview: <http://www.tennischannel.com/video/videoplayer.aspx?embedcode=JsMGYwZTpJ7ovKii9n6uaecSfErVvUuMU&lid=1&>

"I was awfully pleased to do it," said Maria. "It's been a while since I was on American television, live!

"They wanted to know about how I got started and what it was like to play with Althea Gibson – she was pretty formidable, actually...

"I played in the Caribbean when I was and won 14 out of the 15 tournaments, losing to Althea in that one in a very close final.

"She must have been impressed with me because she invited me to play doubles with her at Wimbledon and when I lost in the quarters, I think, I was a bit down and we had to play a doubles match. She said 'look here, I don't care if you lost, I want to win the doubles so shape up! Believe me, I did and we won the title!'"



Maria also made appearances at Town Tennis Club and Mason's Tennis in Manhattan, where she met customers, had her picture taken with them and signed autographs.

"I'm always amazed at how many people seem to know me," she said.

"Of course, Mason's is a Brazilian tennis player's port of call and they all watch our transmissions so perhaps it is not so surprising after all!"

Out at the US Open, Maria has been working with her TV crew to cover different activities and angles surrounding the on-court action.

"I was pleased to meet Victoria Duval's parents the other day and to do an interview with them," she said.

"They are so proud of their daughter, who is only 17, putting out Sam Stosur in the first round and they have had a lot of traumas – she was held at gunpoint during a kidnapping and the father was buried alive in the Haiti earthquake – it's good to see something nice happening to them as a family."

Maria has also been hitting regularly at Town Tennis where the likes of Jimmy Connors and Monica Seles have also been using the courts to hit a few balls with the pros.

"It's been fun to spend time with friends too," she said. "I've been catching up with people I only see at this time of year."



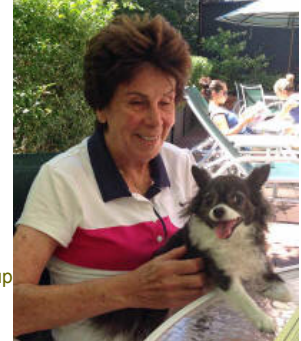
NEW YORK! NEW YORK! 24/25 August 2013

It's time for the US Open and Maria arrived in New York for the weekend to prepare for a hectic two weeks starting on Monday.

"We are back to covering everything live from Flushing Meadows after a couple of years of splitting the transmission between New York and Rio," she said.

"I'll be doing several short features a day as well as commentating on important matches so I am already researching it all.

"There are always a lot of changes to report about the site and the tournament, as well as keeping up with all the players and what they are doing!"



It hasn't all been work though, and Maria managed to visit Town Tennis to hit with pro Dante and spend time with members.

"I'm an honorary member at Town Tennis and I enjoy the club so much. It's very different to what I am used to and I get to hit with the pros there.

"On Saturday we had lunch outside and it was a beautiful day!"

She also dropped in at the Nike Hospitality House located this at the Skylight at Moynihan, an enormous warehouse space.

Skylight at Moynihan Station is located in the historic James A. Farley Post Office on West 33rd Street in Manhattan in an acclaimed McKim, Mead and White building that features a Beaux-Arts exterior in sharp contrast to its dramatic industrial interior that at one time processed 90% of the mail in the United States.

Event spaces include the 41,000 square foot former Mail Sorting Room, and the 33,000 square foot Postal Dock, both spaces rich in New York City history and character.



The venue is extremely production friendly, and the perfect backdrop upon which any creative vision can be brought to life and Nike capitalised on the unusual space.

"Nike always come up with special ideas and this place was amazing," said Maria.

"I took a friend along with her dog and the Nike people loved her! You can see that from the pictures.

"I really appreciate the support Nike give me, especially Monica [Kolstad], who takes such good care of me both here and at Wimbledon."

Maria took time to visit Mason's Tennis, the Manhattan sports shop, where she caught up with some of the staff.

"The shop is always full of Brazilians," said Maria. "They speak Portuguese there and are very friendly to customers so it is a popular stop for visitors that play tennis.



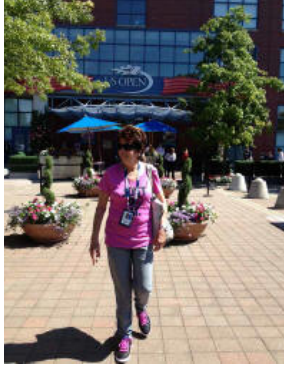
"I always enjoy looking at their merchandise and talking to the staff, who are very knowledgeable.

"I've promised to go back when Mark is there later in the week!"

Mark Mason founded the shop some 38 years ago and it has provided New Yorkers with a full service tennis store ever since.

On day one of the US Open Maria conducts a full reconnaissance of SporTV's on-site facilities as well as re-acquainting herself with old friends, such as Roy Fugazy, the boss of the transportation system.





"Roy is a very important person for us all," she says. "Without him, we'd all be lost in the Manhattan traffic somewhere. He and his team take good care of us all!"

"It's important for me to know who is going to be there and where everything is for my work," she explains.

"We then discuss what we would like to do, and when and where so we can provide viewers back home with a good experience of the Open.

"It doesn't just happen! It all has to be planned but sometimes it gets very spontaneous!" she laughs.

SporTV is owned by Globosat, Brazil's television network that includes TV Globo, which has a massive audience.

TV Globo International Network operates satellite television channels around the world, including in the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Japan, bringing a mix of entertainment, news and sports programming sourced from TV Globo, GNT, Globo News, Canal Viva, Canal Futura and SporTV to Brazilian and other Portuguese-speaking people.



LONDON, 4 August 2013

"It's been a really good visit!" said Maria as she headed home to Sao Paulo.

"What a Wimbledon and the weather in England has been fantastic ever since. This country in the sun is wonderful.

"I have had a chance to catch up with friends and last week I took Andy [Margaron], the pro from David Lloyd Beckenham who has been hitting with me over these past weeks very early in the mornings before he goes to work, to Wimbledon for lunch as a thank you.

"It was also his birthday last week so I showed him around the Club, which is quite different outside The Championships.

"It is always nice to see Members there and this time Tim [Henman] was there too and we chatted about Wimbledon. He was so thrilled to have taken his family to the women's final and said he couldn't believe the atmosphere in the stands!

"Tim Phillips, former Chairman of the Club, was also there, and a bunch of others who were a bit surprised that I am still here, but not for long now!"



"On Friday I was invited to the Pont de la Tour restaurant on the south Bank of the Thames by Howard and Carol Ware and we had a lovely dinner overlooking Tower Bridge with the Tower of London and, once again, I was reminded of all the Tudor history I have been enjoying over the past weeks.

"On Saturday I attended the christening of Archie [Tomes] at Four Elms as a friend of the family and was very surprised when the Vicar, Wendy, recognised me and asked me all about my frilly pants!

"It was a lovely ceremony in a typical English country village with cricket on the green opposite St Paul's Church and then we had champagne and scones afterwards at Juliette and J's home.

"Again the weather was kind and family and friends, with lots of young ones, enjoyed the garden and the occasion.



"Four Elms is very close to Chartwell, Winston Churchill's home, and I have been fortunate to see around there too a few years back. That too is full of history!

"Now it's time to fly home for a few weeks ahead of the US Open at the end of the month, which is such a contrast to the English summer!

"I have to see the latest Bueno, who arrived while I was away – Francisco! He is the son of my eldest nephew, Pedro, and Mariana and is the seventh now, of that generation.

"They have been sending me lots of pictures but it is time to meet him in person!"



LONDON, 31 July, 2013

Maria spent a few days at the weekend doing a little sight-seeing, first touring Hampton Court Palace and then visiting Warwick Castle.

"I've been watching the TV series 'The Tudors' so to see where Henry VIII actually lived was quite something.



"Hampton Court is actually two palaces – the Tudor one and then, behind, a Baroque addition with huge gardens all around. An unbelievable place actually.





"I was fascinated to see the Royal Tennis Court there too... Henry VIII is credited with inventing Real Tennis and had the court built as a model of one of the courtyards where he used to play. There was a coaching clinic going on there when we went inside!"

"I have always loved castles so to get the chance to visit Warwick Castle was great too."

"It is now owned by Madame Tussaud's apparently and they have turned it into a sort of theme park with lots of activities for all the family."

"When we went on Saturday, it was really packed with people but we got to go inside and that was really interesting."

"It gave a better idea of how the Tudors lived because the rooms had all the furniture inside. It was fascinating!"



Maria also climbed 530 steps to get up to the ramparts and the Cesar Turret.

"That was a bit tiring," she admitted. "But well worth the view!"

"We also saw the Birds of Prey show, which featured an enormous, young Milky Grey Owl called Ernie, who was in training, and a 25-year old American Bald Eagle called Sydney."

Maria also found time to have a hit with Claire Spears at Watlington Tennis Club.

"We both had a good time but, later, poor Claire fell on court and broke her left wrist," said Maria. "I was really sorry to hear about it and it was very unlucky for her. I'm wishing her a speedy recovery."

Latest on Claire is that she is mending well!



LONDON, 26 July 2013

Maria visited the Will To Win Hyde Park Centre last week to appear at the TIA UK's Fun-in-the-Park charity fundraiser event.

The two beneficiaries were The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust and the Will To Win Foundation.

It was a picturesque setting on a glorious summer's evening and Maria got a chance to catch up, once again, with Elaine Paige, well known as the first Lady of British Musical Theatre.

Around 60 participants tried their hands at Bowls, Putting, Teddy Tennis and Fast Serving and then enjoyed a Pimms reception and barbecue. This was followed by a fun prize-giving of 'scrolls' and a raffle.

Before all that, Maria had a go at the Mini Tennis and found it was rather more of a challenge than she thought it would be.

"It was very different to what I am used to but I can see how great it is to use the small rackets and soft balls to get kids playing," she said.

Teddy Tennis is a unique coaching system that encourages children aged 2½ to 6 years to get active and learn to play tennis, which works by combining music, pictures and teddy bear stories into a totally interactive learning adventure that children love.

Mini Tennis is now also used as the basis for attracting beginner adults into the game via a programme launched recently by the ITF called Tennis Xpress.

"I understand adult beginners can get quite proficient in a short time if they start off with the soft ball and a regular racket."

"It was a lovely evening and everyone had a good time."



"The park was really beautiful. We were very close to the Albert Memorial and could see the London Eye and the Shard in the distance – right in the centre of town!"

"It was fun to see Elaine again. She is very supportive of these events."

"What a fun evening!" Tweeted Elaine Paige, President of the Dan Maskell Tennis Trust after the event. "Great charity fundraiser organised by @TennisIndUK @Will2WinTennis in #Hyde Park."

The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust is a tennis charity that raises funds for people with disabilities.

Formed in 1997 and named after the late Dan Maskell ('the voice of Wimbledon'), the Trust grant aids individuals, disability groups and programmes, clubs, schools and associations to help with the purchase of wheelchairs, tennis equipment and grants for

coaching.

The Will to Win Foundation aims to raise money for and distribute grants to individuals, organisations and clubs to enable people of all ages and abilities to play sport.



By doing this, it hopes to promote the enrichment of active lives through sport and to help engage all sections of the community through a shared enjoyment of sport, which in turn will encourage social cohesion

"Both are very worthy causes," said Maria. "I was pleased to help."

The TIA UK plans to make Fun-in-the-Park an annual event.



LONDON, 23 July 2013

Maria attended the very special garden lunch party of a member of Woodfield Grove Tennis Club on Monday – Irene Howell, who was celebrating her 100th Birthday.

Organised by her daughter, Bronwyn, the party was an elegant affair set in the garden with a sit-down lunch for around 80 guests.

"I felt very honoured to be included," said Maria. "And it was really a very nice party, with Rene in really good form."

"it's the first time I have celebrated someone's 100th birthday and I got to see the birthday card that The Queen sent her too. It used to be a telegram but now she sends a card!"

"It was a beautiful day too – nice and hot, although I think some of the guests found it a bit much. Luckily they had a tent that kept most of them in the shade.

"The best thing was to see how much Rene was enjoying herself!"

LONDON, 22 July 2013

Maria has stayed on in London for a while to catch up with friends.

"One week I am watching the Wimbledon final from the Royal Box and the next weekend I am at Woodfield Grove, a small tennis club in south London, watching the finals of their club tournament!" laughs Maria.

"I've been an honorary member there for many years and it is always fun to go there to see the matches. This year it was a very hot day, even for a Brazilian!"

"They always serve a really good lunch, followed by afternoon tea!"

Last weekend Maria presented the prizes at the finals of the Beckenham Lawn Tennis Club tournament, where she is also a member.

"Beckenham is a bigger club and it was great to see a lot of people turning out to watch the finals.

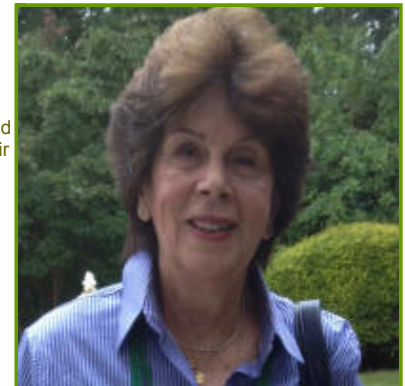
"These last few years the weather hasn't been too good but this year there were ideal conditions for playing in.

"I had my hands full because there are lots of junior events in addition to the five open events.

"And again I enjoyed a lovely tea!"

"I used to play the Beckenham Tournament, which was a warm-up grass court event before Wimbledon, so visiting there always brings back memories of playing on the grass courts and riding the train out from London for my matches."

The club honoured Maria by creating the Maria Bueno Lounge in the Summer Pavilion that recently was listed by English Heritage as a Grade II building because of its architectural interest.



BECKENHAM SUMMER PAVILION, 22 July 2013

The Summer Pavilion at Beckenham Cricket Club was listed by English Heritage on 22 March 2013 as a good representative example of the bungalow-with-verandah style of pavilion which predominated in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras and substantially intact, retaining the majority of its original fabric.

Few intact examples of tennis pavilions survive from the early days of the sport so Beckenham is quite rare and of historic interest as an early facility for women at a club with a notable history within the sport of tennis, being one of the oldest clubs to remain at its original location and hosting the first ever 'open' grass court event open to both amateur and professional players from 1886.

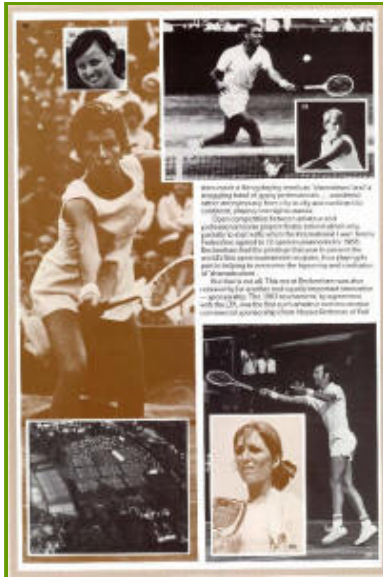
Beckenham Cricket Club was founded in 1866 and the following year leased the ground at Foxgrove Road.

In 1879 three grass tennis courts were cut and a tennis section of the club founded in response to the growing popularity of lawn tennis during the previous decade and the success of the first championship at Wimbledon in 1877.



Beckenham is one of the oldest surviving tennis clubs in the world still at its original location.

In 1880 membership was opened to women players and the number of courts expanded.



From 1886 until 1996 the club hosted the Kent All-Comers' Championships, which in 1968 became the first ever 'open' grass court event open to both amateur and professional players.

Many international tennis players appeared and the list of those who won both the event and Wimbledon include Helen Wills Moody, Maureen Connolly, Margaret Court, Anne Jones, Billie-Jean King, Maria Bueno, Martina Navratilova, John Newcombe, Arthur Ashe, Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe.

The club also hosted a Davis Cup tie in 1922.

The current tennis pavilion, on the north-west side of the cricket pitch, was erected in about 1896.

It is not shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map published in 1895 but does appear on the 1896 second edition.

The original cricket pavilion, on the south side of the cricket pitch, (demolished and replaced by the current building in the late C20) is also not shown on the 1895 OS map and it seems likely that the two pavilions were built at the same time.

Originally known as the Ladies Pavilion it would have provided women players with their own facilities separate from the male-only preserve of the main cricket pavilion.

By the 1933 OS map the pavilion had been extended to the east to take on its current footprint.



The pavilion was used as the ladies changing room during the annual championship tournament.

At some point, probably post Second World War, the northern open verandah was partially enclosed.

Historic photographs show that the originally open verandah facing the cricket pitch had been glazed earlier, probably just before the First World War.

From 1998 the pavilion was refurbished with some alterations to the interior and reopened as the Summer Pavilion by Maria Bueno (a member of the club and who now has a lounge named after her) in June 2003.

WIMBLEDON, 9 July 2013

Maria Bueno looks back at last week at Wimbledon...

"Well, it goes to show that anything can happen in tennis. Last week I thought Serena [Williams] had the title in the bag and then she lost, rather dramatically, to [Sabine] Lisicki in the quarters.

"We couldn't really believe it but it opened up the women's draw even more and then, when Lisicki beat [Agnieszka] Radwanska in the semi-final it seemed all the more amazing.

"Marion Bartoli came through the other half of the draw without dropping a set, reaching the final for the second time in her career.

"She is a really unusual player with a style all of her own. She jumps around, makes shadow swings and plays very differently. Quite eccentric really but clearly effective.

"It was a disappointing final, though, perhaps because it lacked star names although it is good to see new players coming through.

"Everyone thought Lisicki would win but she suffered a meltdown that stopped her from performing and because Bartoli had had a similar experience in 2007, she came out swinging.

"Lisicki got very upset and it is hard to play tennis that way, but she did put a bit of pressure on Bartoli in the second set.



"Despite it being a bit of anti-climax, you have to admire Bartoli holding her nerve and winning the trophy for France. For them, it's a greatest win since Amelie Mauresmo won here in 2006.

"It was all very different and unexpected but no less of an achievement.

"As for the men's, the two top players in the world made it through and Andy Murray realised the dream of a nation.

"He played really well under pressure and managed to beat a very tired [Novak] Djokovic in straight sets with the Centre Court crowd screaming him on.

"Djokovic took nearly five hours to beat [Juan Martin] Del Potro in five sets in the semis, while Murray had his hands full with [Jerzy] Janowicz, dropping a set in a much shorter match.



"Murray's greatest test was earlier, against Fernando Verdasco in the quarters, when he came back from two sets down to win 7-5 in the fifth but he had time to recover ahead of his semi final.

"The atmosphere for the final was amazing – a bit like when Andy won the Olympic Gold medal here – and Djokovic handled the situation like a star, fighting to the very last point.

"It was history in the making and for British fans the moment to stop looking back 77 years to Fred Perry's last win here.

"For me, that will be a great relief too!

"Congratulations to Andy, though, on winning his second Grand Slam title.

"In all it's been a wonderful Wimbledon – full of upsets and surprises and now we have two new champions.

"I had the privilege to attend the Champions Dinner at the Intercontinental Hotel and had a chat with both champions. I was particularly impressed with Marion who was so thrilled to have won the title and didn't mind one bit that she was being upstaged by Andy.

"And he showed himself to be very patient and appreciative of all the attention. I'm sure life has got a bit crazy for him now!"



WEEK ONE AT WIMBLEDON WRAP, 30 June 2013

Maria Bueno looks back at the opening week of The Championships:

"It was an amazing first week at Wimbledon! I don't think I've ever seen anything like it...

"More top 10 players either retired or got beaten than ever before and something like 13 players withdrew in all, which is unheard of.

"Some blamed the grass but you never heard any criticism from those who won!

"I do think, though, that because of the bad weather here in England, the grass is about a month behind and they are playing on it as if they had The Championships in May.

"It is very lush, which makes it slippery and, perhaps, the soles on the shoes have changed a bit too. I heard they are having talks with the shoe manufacturers after Wimbledon to discuss that?

"Poor Rafa [Nadal] was a victim of his own success. He put so much into coming back from injury over the past four months or so to win at Roland Garros that he desperately

needed to recover and didn't have enough time.

"With Wimbledon moving back from 2015, it will give an extra week for that but it will be too late for Rafa, who has suffered from not being able to make the transition from clay to grass twice now at Wimbledon.

"As for Roger [Federer], he was playing so well and then the impossible happened! I couldn't believe it because he has looked so relaxed, so secure and so sure but, perhaps, that's what went wrong.

"You also have to give credit to the players that beat both Roger and Rafa, who played the matches of their lives, rather like Lukas Rosol did last year, but then, unfortunately, he couldn't get any further.

"Both Steve Darcis and Sergiy Stakhovsky went onto court knowing they had nothing to lose and believing they had a chance to win.

"Darcis didn't even play his next match and retired injured and Stakhovsky, who managed to get a set off Jurgen Melzer, couldn't sustain that high level any longer. To be a champion you have to be able to do it match after match...

"So Wimbledon has become a two-horse race for the men, but this is always dangerous, particularly if you happen to be British.

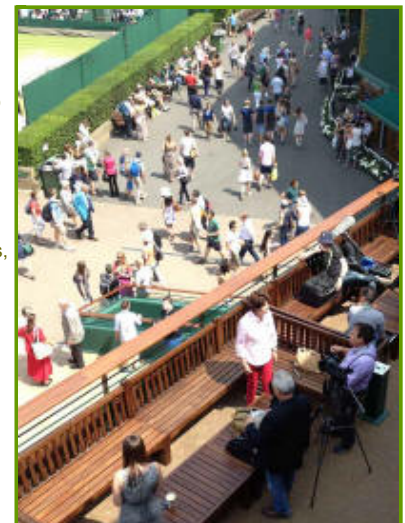
"The expectation on [Andy] Murray is building and he will have to stay focused on just one match at a time to get through.

"[Novak] Djokovic played an almost perfect match on Saturday, making only three unforced errors, and looks unbeatable but then so did Roger so anything can happen and it is possible to peak too soon at a Grand Slam.

"Serena [Williams] looks equally solid in the women's draw, losing only 11 games in the first week.

"The draw already lost [Maria] Sharapova and [Victoria] Azarenka and a bunch of other seeds so it is wide open on the other side to Serena with perhaps Petra Kvitova in with a chance of getting to the final again.

"Last year's finalist [Agnieszka] Radwanska has Serena in her path in the semis and that could be interesting as she seems to have got stronger since last year.



"The weather hasn't been helping the players much. It has been very windy, quite cold at times and, of course, the grass!"

"With all that said, we are all set for week two at Wimbledon and it is always sure to be equally interesting!"



WTA 40 LOVE Party, London 30 June 2013

Maria attended the 40 LOVE Party on Sunday, celebrating four decades of growth and achievement in the women's game with an amazing gathering of WTA World No 1s at the All-England Club in London.

It was a glittering occasion, attended by practically everyone who has been a part of the WTA Tour's evolution into the premier sport for women on the planet over the past 40 years.

Former No 1s WTA Founder Billie Jean King and Margaret (Smith) Court headlined a host of champions, who were introduced onto stage by Pam Shriver and Mary Carillo.

Nineteen women have held the distinction of being ranked No 1 since computer rankings were introduced in 1975, including Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert, Evonne (Goolagong) Cawley, Martina Hingis, Monica Seles, Justine Henin and Serena Williams.

WTA Chairman and CEO Stacey Allaster acknowledged the extraordinary journey the WTA has made since it was founded in 1973, when 63 players, led by Billie Jean, met behind locked doors at the Gloucester Hotel in London, to form an association seeking equality, recognition and respect.

"It was another unique moment in history today, bringing all those players together with the people who have helped to put women's tennis on the map after all these years," said Maria.

"I was never really part of the WTA because I wasn't playing when it was formed but I did come back to the tour in the mid-seventies.

"Of course, I know everyone and it was wonderful to see them all together, marking such a landmark, 40 years, in the history of the game."

Billie Jean paid tribute to Maria from the stage, saying she idolised her and Margaret (Smith) Court, who had such a great rivalry in the 1960s and had laid the foundation for the public interest in women's tennis.

Maria applauded her, and then reminded her that they had won the doubles together at Wimbledon [in 1965] when she had played right court to Billie Jean's ad-court.

"I always got to play where people didn't want to play!" Billie Jean quipped.



"She [Billie Jean] always acknowledges that women's tennis existed before the formation of the WTA, something many others often forget," said Maria.

"But without the WTA, for sure, there would not be equal prize money for women today, or equal rights for that matter, because not only did Billie Jean champion the sport, she also fought for women socially too.

"You have to admire her energy and commitment over all these years and it was just the perfect occasion to acknowledge all that and the efforts of those who have followed her."

Maria sported an elegant white pant suit by Ricardo Almeida, the Brazilian couturier, which sports a teasing see-through mesh back to the jacket.

"Ricardo is very up-to-date with his fashion ideas because I have seen some echoes of that see-through style over here, including Caroline Wozniacki's tennis dress designed for Wimbledon by Stella McCartney!"

Under the white jacket Maria wore a cerise camisole that set off the suit nicely and her accessories featured the latest snakeskin look in shoes, belt and purse.

It was her own personal echo of the past when Maria lit up Centre Court and 'shocked' the establishment by wearing a pinl underskirt to her gorgeous, white dress designed by Ted Tinling.

WIMBLEDON WOES, London 27 June 2013



"I can't believe we have lost Rafa [Nadal] and now Roger [Federer] so early in the tournament," said Maria on Wednesday. "It changes things completely."

It was 'Withdrawal Wednesday' too at Wimbledon, as a run of players were finding it hard to stay upright and either retired hurt or were beaten – Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, John Isner, Victoria Azarenka, Maria Sharapova and Caroline Wozniacki and to name but a few.



"It was amazing. One story after another, all on one day," reflected Maria. "It makes you wonder what is really happening out there?"

"It's pretty clear in Rafa's case because he gave so much, physically, to win Paris and decided to miss out on Halle to rest up a bit so he got no grass court matches ahead of Wimbledon.

"Playing on the grass is totally different to clay and although it is a softer surface, the bounce of the ball is very low and you have to get down lower, which wasn't too good for Rafa's knees. You could see he was limping so he really hadn't rested enough.

"It was still very close and all credit to Steve Dracis, who like [Lukas] Rosol last year, played the match of his life.

"And now Roger has gone too, outplayed by a serve and volleyer! Sergiy Stakhovsky pulled off the biggest upset because Roger was looking so fit and playing so well.

"It's interesting that Lleyton Hewitt too was convincingly beaten by another serve-volleyer, Dustin Brown. Perhaps this is something we can look forward to in the next few years.

"Wimbledon have said that the courts are playing the same as in last year's but many of the players are suggesting they are way more slippery, which is a worry. Maybe it is something to do with shoes these days, who really knows?

"For sure there are too many injuries so maybe organisers around the world need to look at Martina's [Navratilova] suggestion that all matches should be best of three sets. There some merit in that but it would be a shame to break with the tradition if five sets for the men at the Grand Slams because it makes them so special.

"I think the extra week between Roland Garros and Wimbledon planned from 2015 on is a really good thing because it will give players another week on the grass."



IN THE ROYAL BOX, Tuesday 25 June 2013

Maria was invited to the Royal Box at Wimbledon on Tuesday and had a wonderful day with her guest, Howard Ware.

"It was really nice and such a privilege. We had the opportunity to meet a lot of really interesting people as well as watching the tennis from the best seat in the house!

"I was very honoured to meet JK Rowling and her husband, Neil Murray. He is a doctor so Howard, who is a surgeon, and they got on very well. We all had a good time."



JK Rowling brought a bit of magic to the Royal Box, watching top seeds Djokovic and Serena Williams win their first-round matches.

In addition to the Harry Potter author, a slew of celebrities have been seen at SW19 through the first two days of The Championships, including actors Dominic West and Matthew Morrison, Downton Abbey actresses Michelle Dockery and Laura Carmichael, Pippa and James Middleton, former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Princess Michael of Kent, golfers Rory McIlroy and Ernie Els, model Naomi Campbell and singer Nicole Scherzinger amongst others.

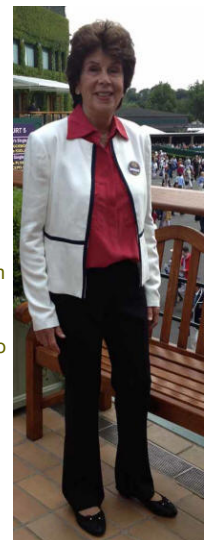
On Tuesday, Maria was wearing an ensemble designed by Ricardo Almeida, the Brazilian couturier, and she looked very lovely and stylish too!

"I feel really good in Ricardo's clothes, perhaps because he hand-picked them for me knowing what I need to be doing in them!

"Fun as it is to sit in the Royal Box all day watching the tennis, it is a very long day and it is important not only to look smart but to be comfortable and he has done just that for me.

"Plus, I just love the clothes!"

We can't wait to see the next outfit...



ON THE EVE OF WIMBLEDON, London 22 July 2013

Maria visited the All England Club on Friday and can report that all the preparations there are well in hand for the start of The Championships on Monday.

She also caught up with her friends at Nike and bumped into Roger Federer in the road outside, who was looking very relaxed and ready to go.





"I was so surprised to see him. When he rushed over to say hello, we had a chat standing in the middle of the road! His manager, Tony, was with him and it was fun to reminisce on their visit to Sao Paulo in December. We had such a good time together!"

She then did a tour of the club, which was already buzzing with players, their coaches, agents and families, all looking to hit on the grass. Unfortunately the covers were on because it was raining!

"The draw was done in the morning so everyone was talking about it," she said.

"Roger has Rafa [Nadal] in his quarter – the most dangerous of 'floaters', seeded number five – but, really, it doesn't matter because you have to play everyone in the end at a Grand Slam to win, so Roger won't be worried about it yet.

"The important thing is to get through the first round safely. Everyone is a little edgy over that, which is why the first few days are always so interesting to watch."

Federer, who opens his campaign on Monday against Romanian Victor Haneseciu, is coming off his sixth title on the grass at Halle, while Nadal, rested after stamping his mark on the Roland Garros crown for an eighth time, faces the Belgian, Steve Darcis.

Rafa will have to beat three Wimbledon champions to reclaim the title he won in 2008 and 2010, with Lleyton Hewitt, Federer and top-seeded Novak Djokovic all potentially standing in his way.

Federer and Nadal are in the same half of the draw as Britain's second seeded Andy Murray, who is hoping to go one better than his run to the final last year.

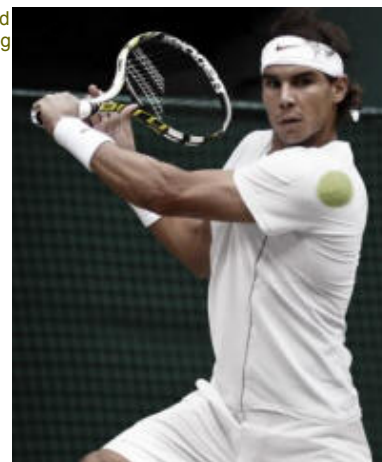
Murray comes off an impressive build-up of his own, having become the first British man since 1925 to lift a third Queen's Club trophy and begins against German Benjamin Becker.

The 2011 champion, Novak Djokovic, is still the favourite for the title and takes on German Florian Mayer in Round 1 with a potential quarter-final against Czech seventh seed and 2010 runner-up Tomas Berdych.

Spain's fourth seed David Ferrer, fresh from making his first Grand Slam final at the French Open, kicks off against Argentina's Martin Alund.

"There is lots to follow over the first couple of days but half the draw is then gone," observes Maria.

"As for the women, once again you have to go with Serena [Williams], going for her sixth title. I don't think she'll be worried by Luxembourg's Mandy Minella but Sabine Lisicki and Zheng Zie are in her section of the draw. Sooner or later, someone is going to figure out how to beat her!"



Serena Williams opens her defence of her title in the first match on Centre Court on Tuesday.

Agnieszka Radwanska, the fourth seed, may also stand in her way, assuming the Pole finds the inspired form that earned her a spot in her maiden major final at the All England Club a year ago.

"Radwanska took Serena to three sets in the final last year and might pose a threat, but I still think she will come through."

Maria Sharapova, the 2004 Champion, is in the other half of the draw and cannot meet Serena until the final but has the No 2 seed

and this year's Australian Open champion, Victoria Azarenka, to contend with first.

"Sadly, Venus [Williams] is missing this year because of a back injury," said Maria.

"At the end, of course, everyone has everything to play for! Let's hope we get the weather because the last few days of wind and cold have played havoc with Eastbourne!"



SUPPORTING WHEELCHAIR TENNIS, London 20 July 2013

Maria took the opportunity of supporting a fund-raiser for disability tennis on Tuesday when she joined renowned singer and actress Elaine Paige at the prestigious Wentworth Club.



Elaine is President of The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust, the tennis charity that raises funds for people with disabilities and was host for the day.

Formed in 1997 and named after the late broadcaster, Dan Maskell, who was known





as the 'voice of Wimbledon', the Trust grants individuals, disability groups and programmes, clubs, schools and associations to help with the purchase of wheelchairs, tennis equipment and grants for coaching.



Fourteen teams signed up to play a round of golf on the famous Wentworth course and were joined later in the day by a further group of non-golfers for a Pimms reception, followed by dinner in the magnificent Ballroom. There was also a raffle and a silent auction, all helping to raise funds for this deserving cause.

Wentworth Club is a privately owned golf club and health resort in Virginia Water, Surrey on the south western fringes of London, not far from Windsor Castle, that hosts the BMW

PGA Championship in May each year.

The club was founded in 1926 and is one of the world's finest golf and country clubs – an oasis less than an hour from central London, with its famous castellated Clubhouse, three championship courses, a Tennis & Health Club, an active social calendar and dining inspired by The Ivy and Le Caprice.

"It is such a beautiful place," said Maria, who was impressed with her surroundings on arrival. "The grounds are spectacular and the club house is very elegant.

"I was so pleased to meet Elaine [Paige]. We had the chance to talk quite a bit during dinner about lots of things, including if she gets nervous before a performance... and I'll never tell!

"She loves tennis and is very committed to the charity.



"I also met Peter Norfolk, the British wheelchair champion, who has won everything possible around, including two Paralympic gold singles medals, and founded a company called Equipment for the Physically Challenged; as well as Martin McElhatton, Chief Executive of Wheelpower, the sports organisation for wheelchair sport in the UK."

It was an eye-opener for Maria to learn in more detail about the sport that is growing each year, including the precision equipment that disabled players now use to compete.

"I really admire their dedication and competitiveness. Not only that, they have competed at the highest level while working to open up opportunities for other disabled players.

"Apparently Elaine, a pretty accomplished club player herself, recently tried her hand at playing the game in a wheelchair and understands the constraints these place on them. She is a great champion of the cause."

Elaine Paige, OBE, became President of the Trust at the beginning of 2010 and her commitment to its goals is exemplary.

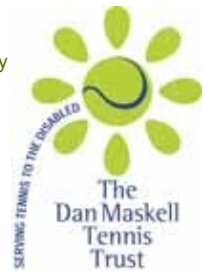
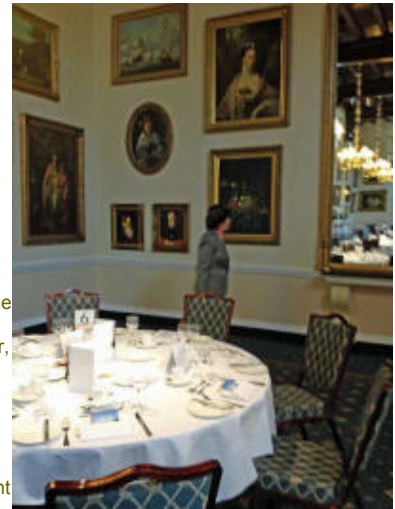
"The more wheelchairs we have for new players to try out the sport, the more the game will grow," she says. "Tennis is a completely inclusive sport and disabled people can take part in any

tennis activity.

"Wheelchair tennis integrates very easily with the non-disabled game, as it can be played on any tennis court with no modifications required to rackets or balls. The only difference is that wheelchair tennis players are allowed two bounces of the ball."

Elaine was equally thrilled to meet Maria and the two exchanged autographs on their respective 'official photograph'!

The very successful day and evening raised a significant amount for the Trust and was enjoyed by all.



PRE-WIMBLEDON WARM-UP, London 13 June 2013

In the lead-up to The Championships at Wimbledon, which starts in just two weeks' time, tennis focus is now on the grass courts at The Queen's Club where Andy Murray is defending his title.

"Andy missed Paris because of a back injury but he is looking pretty fit now and has benefitted from the rest," comments Maria, who is watching form with interest.

She has also been visiting the TV Globo studios in Camden Town, north London where she filmed a short promo for broadcast in Brazil ahead of their Wimbledon coverage.



"It was a funny one," she said. "I had to fix my shirt as if I was looking into a mirror and then say into the camera 'how do you like me all in white?'... We had to do about fifteen takes but I saw the one they chose as the best and it really looks quite good!"



The rushes can be seen here > www.youtube.com



In the pictures, Maria is seen with Renata Machado, one of the oldest and most celebrated correspondents for TV Globo, and Sergio Gils, a senior cinematographer who filmed the promo.

Meanwhile, Maria has also been playing at various tennis clubs, many of which she is an honorary member at.

"I am so lucky to have been invited to be a member of six London clubs and it's a real honour," said Maria.



"At every one of them, I have wonderful people to play, plus it keeps me active and busy!"

This week, apart from keeping an eye on the action at Queen's, Maria re-visited the Olympic Park in Stratford, in east London.

"It was another wet day and they didn't get much played at Queen's so we took the opportunity to return to the site of the London 2012 Olympics.

"It was such a fantastic experience for me last year, to commentate on the Olympics for TV Globo/SporTV, but I was mostly there at night because of the time difference, so to see a bit of the park in daylight with the Olympic stadium in the background was great.

"The park isn't fully open yet because it is being reorganised after the Olympics and is having an 18-month transformation into the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.



"I am told the work involves the removal of temporary structures, the adaption of the Olympic venues for their long-term uses, the creation of new parkland, new pedestrian links from the surrounding area, and new buildings including housing, schools and other facilities.

"All very exciting for the area and a wonderful legacy!"

Maria was interested to learn that TV Globo and the BBC have been collaborating since last year's Olympics as official host broadcasters of their respective events.

"With the 2016 Olympics being held in Rio de Janeiro, TV Globo has to provide coverage to the whole world and what the BBC achieved last year was ground-breaking so there is a lot to live up to!"

As for the tennis, Maria says it is hard for the players to transition from the clay of Paris onto the grass.

"It's difficult, especially as the weather is horrible – too much wind and rain, which is leaving the grass very green and slippery, here in the UK. Perhaps they are having better conditions in Halle, Germany, I don't know...

"You have to get comfortable on the grass, quickly, and when it is so windy, it is really hard because Wimbledon starts on 24 June, now less than two weeks away.

"When the calendar changes in 2015 and there is an extra week between Paris and Wimbledon, it will get a bit easier.

Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic are the only top ten players who are not playing a warm-up event prior to Wimbledon.

"You can understand why after the run they both had in Paris which was tough for them both," reflects Maria.

Interestingly, since its inception in 1979, there have been six different players to complete the Queen's Club-Wimbledon title double in the same year, including John McEnroe (81, 84), Jimmy Connors (82), Boris Becker (85), Pete Sampras (95, 99), Lleyton Hewitt (2002) and Rafael Nadal (2008).

In 2011, Andy Murray became the first two-time British champion since Francis Gordon Lowe (1913-14, '25).

"That's why it is important to watch the form at Queen's!" concludes Maria.



RAFA REIGNS SUPREME, Paris 10 June 2013

Paris in the springtime... visions of sun and blossom but, this year, it was freezing cold, wet and windy!

"It was such a shame for such a beautiful place," lamented Maria. "We were looking forward to the top clay court event and had very few good days and that affects the tennis because poor conditions make it very difficult to play great tennis."

Roland Garros stood up to the test and, remarkably, the king of clay, Rafael Nadal, added a record-breaking eighth Roland Garros crown to his growing tally of Grand Slam titles on Sunday, beating countryman David Ferrer in the final in Paris.

"They were lucky to finish on time," continued Maria.



"The most memorable match probably was the semi-final between Rafa and (Novak) Djokovic, which turned into an epic battle in the end.



"It went beyond the sport when everyone was questioning whether Rafa could win again in Paris, and he had to beat the world number 1 to do so.

"It was all the more remarkable because he spent so much time out of the game last year.

"I know what he was going through because I saw him on his return in Sao Paulo and he was very unsure of himself, physically and mentally. We talked about what it takes to overcome these doubts and I've watched him as he has slowly built up his belief again.

"To finally win the title again at Roland Garros, for the eighth time – something no-one else has been able to do – is something completely extraordinary and he must feel very proud of himself."



While the five-set semi against Djokovic was the match of the tournament, the final didn't disappoint when Nadal beat fellow countryman David Ferrer in straight sets, 6-3 6-2 6-3, improving his win ratio to 59-1, with his only defeat in Paris at the hands of Sweden's Robin Soderling in the fourth round in 2009.

"He could easily have taken the final lightly," observed Maria. "And when the lunatic with the flare ran onto court, he was distracted for a time but it was only a slight chance for Ferrer, who tried his hardest to make an impact.

"We must congratulate Ferrer for his fantastic run to the final. I don't think anyone really expected that.

"It seemed that (Jo-Wilfried) Tsonga was destined for the final when he pulled off his win against Roger (Federer) in the quarters and we all thought he would cruise past Ferrer but the Spaniard beat him very easily, much to the disappointment of the home crowd."

Maria felt sorry for Djokovic who, after beating Tommy Haas in his quarter-final, was told that his first coach and second mother, Jelena Gencic, had died at the age of 77.

"She discovered him and encouraged Djokovic's talent so it must have been emotionally very hard for him to focus on his match with Rafa," said Maria.

"And what about Haas, then? His run was amazing, as was Tommy Robredo's – both survived so many five-setters that I lost count!"

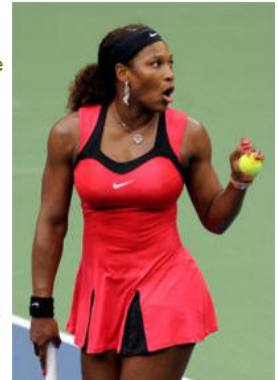
From Maria's standpoint, there was only ever going to be one winner in the women's singles.

"Only Svetlana Kuznetsova made any lasting impression on Serena and scored a set off her. Everyone else was sent home rather fast.

"Serena is just too strong for the rest of the women right now and you have to admire her for that dominance that she seems able to sustain.

"She, too, has come back from a long time off, two years ago, in her case serious illness, and although she is a bit in and out at times, when she is 'hot' she is unplayable.

"At least (Victoria) Azarenka and Maria (Sharapova) put up some fight on this occasion but it was always going to be Serena who would raise the trophy, mostly because of the incredible self-belief that she has."



So as the tennis world closed the book on Paris and headed for the grass courts of England, most were hoping for the sun to come.

NUPTIALS AND TENNIS, London 29 May 2013

Since arriving in London, Maria has been travelling around the country, with a day trip to Chichester, followed by a weekend away for the marriage of Kris Vankay and Juliet McGill.

"I have known Kristian since he was very small and I was so pleased to be able to make his wedding, which was in Stratford upon Avon in the church where William Shakespeare is buried," said Maria.

"It was a beautiful day too, which was lucky as it rained all day the day before and was freezing cold!"



"The reception was held at The Lygon Arms, a very famous, old hotel at Broadway in the heart of England.

"For me to see the English countryside like that and to stay in such a historic place was a perfect break!"

Maria was wearing a specially tailored haut couture suit by Ricardo Almeida, which was greatly admired by the guests as well as the bride and groom.

"It was wonderful to be included in the ceremonies and my very best wishes go to the happy couple."

On her return to London, Maria met up with Gill Brook at Wimbledon, the wife of the All England Lawn Tennis Club Chairman, Phillip Brook.





"We had a great hit together on the indoor courts because, of course, it was once again pouring with rain!"
"It's so nice to get back to Wimbledon, always, and everyone is so welcoming to me at the club," continued Maria.

Maria had the opportunity to say hello to Andy Murray, who was at the club with his team ahead of practising.

"He looked pretty fit to me and it seems he is recovering from the back injury well, although I didn't see him playing," she commented.

"I understand he has only just started hitting again so let's hope it all goes well for him."

Later, during lunch, Gill Brook explained the plans the club has to develop the grounds and facilities over the coming years.

"I am always so impressed at the meticulous planning of the club to guarantee it continues to be the best tournament in the world and I love the idea of tennis in an English country garden!"



"The plans include putting a lot of facilities under ground to open up space, covering number one court with a roof and opening up the walkways; and, apparently, they will start in October by re-developing some of the clubhouse area."

"Of course, by Wimbledon next year, everything will be immaculate again for The Championships and then they will continue with the works when it has finished."

Last month, the Club confirmed its intention to build a retractable roof over No 1 Court, as part of a series of proposals for the future of The Championships under its new Wimbledon Master Plan.

The No 1 Court work is expected to be completed in time for The Championships 2019.

Wimbledon will then have the ability to maintain covered play on its two main show courts for over 26,500 spectators and a worldwide television audience.

At the time, Philip Brook told the media: "It is about giving all our visitors the finest stage on which to enjoy Wimbledon."

Last July, the Club announced that, from 2015, the dates of Wimbledon will move back by one week (29 June-12 July 2015) to create a three-week gap between the French Open and Wimbledon.

The advantage of the move is to give the players more time to rest and recover from Roland Garros, and then to prepare for The Championships.

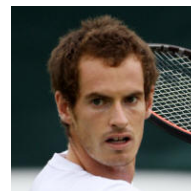
"It makes good sense to increase the gap between Paris and Wimbledon and it has taken a long time to achieve," said Maria.

"Right now it is a tough transition from the clay to the grass if you are a top player reaching the final rounds of Roland Garros and hoping to do well at Wimbledon because there is no time for rest."

"The way the game is played these days, the stresses are both mentally and physically demanding."

"I also think it's great to see the extension of the grass court season after all these years during which playing on this surface has been in decline."

It seems most people are pleased with all these developments too.



For more details on the Wimbledon Master Plan visit
www.wimbledon.com/masterplan

ROLAND GARROS PREVIEW, London 24 May, 2013

The lead-in to Roland Garros is often deceptive, primarily because the red courts of Monte Carlo, Madrid and Rome all play slightly differently but indicators show that the King of Clay, Rafael Nadal, is alive and well.

He may have lost his Monte Carlo crown to Novak Djokovic, but this quickly proved to be a mere blip in the grand scheme of things as normal service was resumed with victories in both Spain and Italy. Nadal is surely the man to beat in Paris and with both Andy Murray and Juan Martin Del Potro not taking part, his major opponents remain Djokovic and Roger Federer.

The Spaniard is the defending champion, having won seven of the eight French Opens he has entered so far; and after winning 36 out of 38 matches since February, including 6 titles, it would be foolish to bet against him.

"I like the look of Stanislaw Wawrinka though," says Maria.

"He has had an amazing season so far, with wins over Andy Murray, David Ferrer, Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and Tomas Berdych."

"Although he hasn't got past the fourth-round in Paris before, he could prove to be a dangerous opponent in Rafa's quarter."



"I am always hoping to see Federer do well but clay isn't his easiest surface and he lost early to [Kei] Nishikori in Madrid and to Nadal in the final in Rome, the only two tournaments he has played on clay this year, and he has Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the Frenchman who pushed Djokovic to four match points in last year's tournament, in his quarter of the draw."

Nadal moved up to be seeded third after Murray withdrew from the tournament due to a back injury and, if all goes according to form, he will meet his chief rival, Djokovic, in the semi-finals.

On the women's side, Serena Williams enters Roland Garros on a 26-match unbeaten run and with the No 1 world ranking.

At age 31, she has looked as good as ever this year, adding five titles to her career haul of 51, and performing well on clay, beating Victoria Azarenka to win in Rome and Maria Sharapova in the Madrid final.

"Serena should coast to the title in Paris, she is playing so well," says Maria. "But clay can be very unpredictable, as can Serena.



"Last year, she lost to Virginie Razzano in the first round in Paris and it has been 10 years since Serena reached the French Open semis so this is clearly not her best surface.

"It could just be that either Sharapova or Azarenka will find a way to stop Serena in the final this year but it is a long shot.

"I really don't see anyone else in contention for the women's title than these three but, as I said, clay can be unpredictable!"

Roland Garros gets under way on 26 May and Maria will be watching, closely.

ON AIR IN BRAZIL, Sao Paulo - March and April 2013

It has been a busy few months for Maria since she covered Rafael Nadal's visit to Sao Paulo in February.



Two television specials in addition to commentating on the ATP Master Event at Monte Carlo have kept her regularly on air for TV Globo and SporTV in Brazil.

The first special was on the Pan American Games for TV Globo's popular Sports Spectacular programme, which celebrated 50 years since the tennis finals were held at the Sociedade Harmonia de Tenis, Maria's home club in 1963.

"I was back on the same stadium where I had won the Pan Am Games, talking about the facilities and remembering how things were back then," said Maria.

"The programme featured all the Brazilian champions that have won the various sports over the years and involved a full crew and a day of filming! It was quite a thing for the club."

The other feature was on Arena, a live sports programme featuring a panel of personalities discussing a wide range of topics on air.

Towards the end of February, Maria was in Florianopolis for the return of top flight women's tennis to Brazil, for the first time in over a decade, covering the inaugural WTA Brasil Tennis Cup in Florianopolis.



Venus Williams, the top seed there, stopped her practice when she spotted Maria arriving at the courts and rushed over to say hello and have a chat.

"She said she never expected to see me there," recalls Maria. "It was great to see her but it was clear she was struggling with her illness, which makes her very tired at times."

Venus battled through three rounds before succumbing to the Russian Olga Puchkova in three long sets in the semi finals. The final was won by Romania's Monica Niculescu in three sets.

Previously the host of ITF Women's Circuit events, Florianopolis is the hometown of ATP legend Gustavo Kuerten. It is the capital city and second largest city of the Santa Catarina state in southern Brazil.

Known for having a very high quality of life, Florianopolis' economy is heavily based on information technology, tourism and services.

It is the home of another famous Brazilian – Guga Kuerten – and is a surfing mecca, as the island is considered to have the best and most consistent waves in the country.

"The WTA has held various lower level futures or challenger tournaments in Brazil over the years - in Bahia, Curitiba, Guarujá and São Paulo," said Maria.

"Now Rio de Janeiro will be added to that list in 2014, which is good news for women's tennis."

In early April Maria was in the SporTV studio covering the Davis Cup tie between Serbia and USA.

"Boise is in Idaho and a couple of hours behind us so that was quite a good schedule for us in Brazil.

"It was a very close tie and the critical match, really, was the doubles when Bozoljac and Zimonjic saw off a fightback by the Bryan brothers to take Serbia 2-1 up into the final day.

"This gave Novak Djokovic the chance of putting Serbia into the semi-finals in the first reverse singles and, although he twisted his ankle rather seriously, he made no mistake in beating Sam Querrey in four sets – 7-5 6-7 6-1 6-0. It was a very impressive performance by the world number one."

A week or so later Maria was again ensconced in the Rio studio, this time covering the matches from Monte Carlo on the live feed.

"It meant a very early start for us because Europe is five hours ahead of us in Brazil," Maria commented.
"After a day of covering matches you almost feel as if you are there.

"When I flew home, I was asked how I got back so quickly from Europe!"

The tournament was full of drama, particularly as Djokovic, playing against the advice of his team, who felt he should rest the ankle injury, improved match by match.

By the time he arrived at the final hurdle, the Serb delivered his best tennis of the week to dethrone eight-time reigning champion Rafael Nadal 6-2 7-6(1).

"I think anybody who saw my expression in the end saw that it was a very emotional win for the reasons [of] living here and what I've been through in the last two weeks," said Djokovic.



"It's a very joyful moment for me. I wanted that trophy badly all my life, especially in the last six, seven years that I've been spending my time and living here between the tournaments in Monaco.

"This is a great confidence boost before the rest of the clay-court season.

"The first six, seven games, eight games, were unbelievable. It's the best that I can play on clay. It's the only way you can win against Rafa. It was very important for me because knowing that Rafa starts very strong from the first point.
"I had the right intensity on the court, the right kind of focus.

"The first five games was a perfect, perfect play."

As for Maria, she felt the match was one of the best she has seen on clay.

"Beating Rafa in Monte Carlo has to be the hardest thing for any player to do," she said.

"Djokovic was nursing an ankle injury but sometimes that helps to focus you and Rafa was coming out of six month or so lay-off and a long trip around Latin American, so perhaps it was not so surprising that he was a bit rusty.

"It was still a great win and certainly set the media talking about Rafa's retirement. For me, I think this has made Rafa all that much stronger!"

By mid-May, Maria was heading across the Atlantic for the European season and greatly looking forward to it!

NADAL WINS IN SÃO PAULO, 18 February 2013



Top seed Rafael Nadal clinched his 37th clay-court title on Sunday when he defeated David Nalbandian 6-2 6-3 in the final of the Brasil Open 2013 in Sao Paulo.

Maria was in the commentary box after having lunched with Uncle Toni, Rafa's mentor and coach.

"I was pleased to chat with him and Rafa's father about how hard it is to come back after so much time away from the tour," she said.

"I've experienced serious injuries that kept me out of the game for months and even years and the hardest part is to get match fit.

"it is not the same to practice. You have to play more and more matches to get back to winning, but the body isn't yet ready for that so it is a battle.. You have to keep going somehow until you get used to it all again"

Nadal took his first trophy since winning at Roland Garros against Novak Djokovic in June 2012.

He returned last week from a seven-month injury lay-off to reach the singles and doubles finals at the VTR Open in Vina del Mar, Chile, but was forced to withdraw from the doubles in São Paulo to try to rest his left knee.



"It's very nice and important because at the end of your career what's left are the titles, and depending on certain moments there are some titles that you appreciate very much," said Nadal.

"This one I appreciate it the most because of all the struggles I went through during the week, with some problems with my knee some days."

The 26-year-old Nadal won \$82,300 in prize money by taking his first indoor clay-court tournament, although it is the second time the Spaniard has won this ATP World Tour 250 tournament. He also won the title in his previous appearance in 2005 when the tournament was staged outdoors in Costa do Sauipe.

Playing against former world No 3 Nalbandian for the seventh time, Nadal reeled off four straight games from 2-2 to take the opening set and then rallied from a 0-2 deficit in the second to win six of the last seven games and claim victory in 78 minutes.

"[It's] true, David didn't play very well, but in general I played my best match of the week," Nadail said.

"I am very happy, to win in Brazil for the second time, it's wonderful. In 2005 it was the beginning of all these last beautiful years. I hope this will be a re-start."

Maria agreed it wasn't a classic final but it was a significant achievement for Nadal.

"We know he has been struggling with his knee and his fitness but to come through with a tournament win like this can only help his confidence.

"I feel sure he is happy about that after two difficult weeks of playing.

"it is really good to have him back on the tour and I hope he will soon feel injury free so he can challenge again at the majors. That's what's important to him!"

There was a home win for Bruno Soares and Alexander Peya when they captured their fourth ATP World Tour team title by edgInge Frantisek Cermak and Michal Mertinak in the final of the Brasil Open, 6-7(5) 6-2 [10-7].

"It was an amazing feeling," said Soares. "The people in Brazil, they really like to cheer you on.

"For me, it's very special, being Brazilian, to play well this week. It's the only chance I get to play at home. Being able to have a good week and a great result is fantastic. The atmosphere on court was amazing."



Maria congratulated the organisers, Koch Tavares, who put on a good show throughout the week.

"The arena was pretty much a sellout, particularly towards the end of the week when Rafa was playing," she said.

"There was a great atmosphere and I really enjoyed working the tournament, and I also appreciated the good care they took of me while I was there."

As for Nadal, he will enjoy a week off before resuming his comeback in a week in Acapulco, although his prospects of playing both Indian Wells and Miami next month are a longshot

"Right now I am only focusing on celebrating today's title," Nadal said.

"I am not in a position to think too far ahead; I need to think day by day, week by week.

"Let's see how my knee feels in Acapulco. We will analyse at the end of this clay swing what happened in these last three tournaments and I will see if I am ready to play in Indian Wells."

NADAL IN SAO PAULO, 15 February 2013

Rafael Nadal's long-awaited return to the ATP Tour has begun in South America on clay and he is the top seed at the Brasil Open this week.

Nadal is playing in Brazil for the second time, having triumphed on his debut in 2005 when the ATP World Tour 250 indoor clay-court tournament was held in Costa do Sauipe.

After 11 successful years in the north of Brazil, the tournament moved in 2012 to Sao Paulo, where it is now played at the Ginasio do Ibirapuera, moving from outdoors to indoors due to regular wet weather in Sao Paulo in February.

Nadal has been absent from the tour since losing at Wimbledon last year with tendonitis in his left knee, a condition that has raised concerns over his future.

The Spaniard is now happy to be back on court and is contesting his second event after reaching the VTR Open final in Vina del Mar last week where he fell to Horacio Zeballos in a close three-set battle.



Nadal won his opener on Thursday, defeating Joao Souza 6-3 6-4, after which he had dinner with Maria in a private lounge at the arena.

"I met Rafa back in 2005 at Sauipe and I am a great fan," said Maria.

"It was such fun to be able to spend some time with him, and his group that included Uncle Toni.

"He is very relaxed and friendly, and took off his shirt because he was so hot but he insisted on putting it on for the photograph with me even though I asked him not to!"





Maria was able to watch his match in the VIP Box but got interrupted by a call from TV Globo in Rio de Janeiro asking her to take up the role of roving reporter and conducting the on-court post-match interview so off she went, back to work.

Contracted to cover one feature match a day by TV Globo, Maria has time for other activities surrounding the event, including clinics for the sponsors.

She also assisted with an on-court presentation of an arrow from a local soap opera to the former world number one.

"I am so happy to be involved with these events [including the Gillette Federer Tour in December] and it is a privilege to get closer to Rafa and Roger, both of whom have always stopped to say hello to me at Wimbledon and the US Open.

"They are such wonderful role models and have a huge following all around the world."

So, it seems, does Maria, whose security detail was increased by organisers Koch Tavares as she moves around the stadium and is being approached by many hundreds of fans for autographs and pictures.

"I am really amazed at the reaction from the public," she said.

"I guess the exposure on television is bringing home my achievements on court all those years ago..."

"There was a group of club members who came to the tennis and couldn't believe how I was being 'mobbed'.

"They said they were so used to me wandering around the club, they had forgotten who I was," she laughed.

"It surprises me too!!"

According to reports, Facebook and Twitter received around 30,000 hits following the posting of the picture with Rafa and Maria... wow!



AUSTRALIAN OPEN WRAP, Sao Paulo, 27 January 2013

Maria gives us some thoughts on the Australian Open which ended on Sunday:

It's quite difficult to follow the Australian Open from Brazil, what with the time difference and my other commitments.

TV Globo doesn't have the rights to Melbourne so I haven't been working the tournament and that's probably why, but, of course, I am watching whenever I can and I'm always tracking results!

It seems the players have had to play in all sorts of conditions and the worst, of course, is the very hot weather you get down in Melbourne.



Even coming from Brazil, I found the heat in Australia very difficult and succumbed to body cramps in the final in 1965. They had to carry me off.

Nowadays the players train very hard for that and are better prepared so you don't see cramp so much, although there were still a few cases when the matches went deep into the fifth set, and there were quite a few of those.

It is amazing that out of the 128 draw, the top four still made it through to the semis, which just shows the gap between [Novak] Djokovic, Roger [Federer] and [Andy] Murray. Without Nadal, [David] Ferrer came through too but couldn't handle Djokovic in the semi-final.

I was sorry to see Federer go out in the semis but you have to admire Murray's progress over the last year and all his work with [Ivan] Lendl was rewarded with his third appearance in the Melbourne final.

Djokovic is number one in the world for a reason – he is really tough! He showed it again against Murray, and he won in four sets in spite of Andy's efforts.

I have the feeling that these two will be fighting out Grand Slam titles for a long time.

On the women's side, the big surprise was seeing Maria Sharapova go out to Li Na, who played amazing tennis to convincingly beat her. She had dropped only nine games in five rounds and was looking like a sure finalist.

So was Serena, and we all thought she would win the title but she was stopped by an exciting young talent, fellow American Sloane Stephens.

Although she suffered an injury to her back and had her sprained ankle strapped, Serena had a brief visit from the trainer and was careful not to make any excuse afterwards.

Unlike the unfortunate medical timeout that [Victoria] Azarenka took after saving five match points in their semi-final, which looked to me as unsportsmanlike. I hope the WTA will look into the incident and review their injury rules as a result.



It seems to me the game has swung completely the other way since my day when no-body was allowed to help me when I collapsed on that court at Kooyong with cramp. That would have meant immediate default!

As it happened, I couldn't have played on anyway but the point is that somehow a middle road has to be found where loss of nerve or conditioning can't be justified by an injury timeout.

That aside, Sloane took it all in her stride and I think she has the makings of a top ten player.

At 19 years of age she is already showing us she has what it takes to perform on the modern stage.



As for Li Na, who has finally found her form again, she didn't drop a set on her way to the final and although she was pushed hard at times, she demonstrated a new sense of maturity and consistency.

Clearly she is also benefiting from a new coach, Carlos Rodriguez, who coached Justine Henin to seven Grand Slam titles.

The final between her and Azarenka went to three sets and Li Na had two bad falls in what was a close contest. That's good for women's tennis, which nowadays has a lot of one-sided matches, unlike the men's.

In the end it was Azarenka who took her second Australian Open title and you could see what it meant to her afterwards as she cried openly, obviously reacting to the rough time she had at the hands of the media this week.

There has been a bit of resurgence in Australian tennis, with their players reaching both the women's doubles final, the mixed doubles final and two of their youngsters in the boys singles final.

It's good to see because, of late, they have only really had [Sam] Stosur and Lleyton [Hewitt] making any headlines.

Bernard Tomic had a good run and was soundly beaten by Federer after being quite vocal in the press. Such is youth – perhaps better to make your racket do the talking, I think...

And so the tour now moves on.

We had a great four days here in Sao Paulo with the Gillette Federer Tour in December and soon we will be welcoming Rafael Nadal back on tour when he plays the Brazil Open.

This has moved from the north of Brazil to the Ibirapuera indoor arena here in Sao Paulo and should be an exciting event.

We are about to get another ATP tournament next year in Rio de Janeiro, which will establish a lead-in event to the Olympics in 2016.

Apparently there were 10 Brazilians competing in various events at the Australian Open and that has to be very encouraging.

