

TRAIN LIKE A LEGEND

Preparing for different surfaces requires a targeted approach. **NATHAN & GISELLE MARTIN** share a program they developed for an all-time great's grass court preparation.

With nine Wimbledon singles titles, Martina Navratilova has deservedly earned a reputation as one of the best grass court players of all time.

When the former world No.1 made a doubles comeback in 2000, we were privileged to work with her for two years. It was an eye-opening experience.

Navratilova is a true athlete. She can ski like a pro, is great at basketball, is an excellent ice hockey player, runs track like a machine and dominates in the gym. Even in her 40s

she excelled as an athlete and left many players half her age in awe.

In a stellar career that netted a record 167 singles and 177 doubles titles, it was Navratilova's physicality and dedication to training that changed the tennis world. It was also a key to her longevity - she won her first Grand Slam title in 1974 and last in 2006.

This is the program Navratilova used for her grass court season preparation. Give it a go and train like the queen of grass. Do it twice a week with purpose and intensity.



1 DUMBBELL INCLINE BENCH LUNGE

PURPOSE: Strengthen legs for low-bouncing balls. *Three sets, 10-12 repetitions.*

- ▶ Raise your back foot to knee height and adjust front foot into a comfortable position. Ensure front foot is pressing evenly on the ground, with toes pointing straight ahead.
- ▶ Keeping upper body upright and front knee pointing straight ahead, lower the back knee towards the ground and drop into a lunge position, stopping just before touching. Do this with a slow controlled movement.
- ▶ Come back up to the start position and repeat for set repetitions.

2 WRIST EXTENSION/FLEXION

PURPOSE: Strengthen the forearm in preparation for more net play. *Three sets, 20 repetitions.*

- ▶ Holding a light dumbbell or barbell, sit with knees bent at 90 degrees.
- ▶ Lay forearms on top of thighs, with hands sitting past knees.
- ▶ Bend hand at the wrist and lower it towards the ground as far as possible, then slowly bring it up as far as possible.
- ▶ Repeat for set repetitions. Then turn arms over and repeat sequence on other side. Adjust weight to feel fatigued at 20 repetitions.

3 DEPTH JUMP REACTION DRILL

PURPOSE: Improve return serve reaction. *Three sets, 10 repetitions.*

- ▶ Start by standing on a knee-high solid box. Have a partner stand five metres away facing you with a tennis ball.
- ▶ Step off box and land with a wide stance, both feet on the ground at the same time. Go straight into a split step. When in the air, the partner should throw the ball, having it land two metres away from you.
- ▶ Let the ball bounce once, then aim to split step into a quick first step and catch the ball in one hand.
- ▶ Return it to the partner and repeat for set repetitions.



4 TRIANGLE LUNGE DRILL

PURPOSE: Prepare lower body for net play.
Three sets, 12 repetitions.

- ▶ Place three cones in a triangle three metres apart. Stand behind cone at the tip of the triangle and have a partner stand opposite four metres away holding two tennis balls.
- ▶ Run forward on the outside of cones and when you reach the next cone have partner drop one ball. Drop down into a lunge position with the outside leg forward and catch the ball before it bounces.
- ▶ Throw the ball back and repeat alternating sides for 12 repetitions, six each side.

5 FORWARD SINGLE LEG HOPS

PURPOSE: Improve first step speed.
Three sets, four-six repetitions.

- ▶ Start by standing on one leg, with toes pointing straight ahead. Make sure knee stays straight and hips neutral throughout the exercise.
- ▶ Sit back by bending the knee slightly and then jump forward using a hopping motion.
- ▶ Land softly and then go straight into another hop as quickly as possible. This exercise needs to flow with no breakdown.
- ▶ Repeat the sequence for set repetitions. **ATM**

TIPS FOR GRASS PREPARATION:

- >> Grass courts produce lower bounces, so focus on lower body exercises.
- >> Footwork and agility drills help improve reaction times on the faster grass surface.
- >> Wrist and forearm strengthening is beneficial as players typically hit more volleys on grass.



STAR TRAINERS

NATHAN AND GISELLE MARTIN, of Tennis Fitness, have been in the health and fitness industry for 20 years. They travelled on the WTA Tour for numerous years and also worked at the Sanchez Casal Tennis Academy in Barcelona, Spain. They've worked with Sam Stosur, Svetlana Kuznetsova, Jennifer Capriati, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Monica Seles, Martina Navratilova, Casey Dellacqua and Lleyton Hewitt. For further information and for previous articles, visit tennisfitness.com.