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TENNIS

A Tournament Director Who's Up on Her Game

By CYNTHIA WOLFE BOYNTON

NEW HAVEN

IT looked like rain was about to drench the Connecticut Tennis Center at [Yale University](#), but Anne Worcester was not worried — yet.

As director of the annual Pilot Pen Tennis Tournament, Ms. Worcester will do more than host about 70 of the world's top tennis players at the center later this week. If it rains, or any number of other potential problems occur, she will be responsible for keeping 100,000 expected fans happy.

“Let it rain now,” Ms. Worcester said, standing courtside on a recent afternoon as quickening drops spotted her blue suit jacket. “Rain and tennis are not good partners.”

Downpours mean postponements and headaches for all involved in the men's and women's matches, which start on Friday and conclude on Aug. 23. Yet the workers constructing tented suites along the stadium's top tier this day did not even seem to notice.

“It's crunch time, and everyone is in high gear,” said Ms. Worcester, 48, who oversees every detail of the \$4.8 million event. “It takes two months to build what becomes a small city here.”

As the final [United States Tennis Association](#) tournament before the United States Open, the Pilot Pen traditionally attracts high-profile players.

There will be Dinara Safina of Russia, a French Open finalist, and Marion Bartoli of France, a 2007 Wimbledon finalist, as well as the Americans John Isner and Donald Young. For the next few days, Ms. Worcester plans to watch matches in Europe and at the Beijing Olympics, looking for players who might want to be in the Pilot Pen.

“Right up until the day the tournament starts, I’ll be sending out invitations,” said Ms. Worcester who, on Thursday, will move to the Omni Hotel here from her New Canaan home, to be closer to the tennis center.

Long involved in professional tennis, Ms. Worcester went from an entry-level job selling tickets to managing worldwide tennis events. She was managing director of the World Tennis Council, then the governing body of women’s tennis. When the council merged with the World Tennis Association in 1994, she was named its chief executive.

Ms. Worcester was the youngest person and first woman to lead a professional sports organization, but a year later, she resigned to devote herself to parenting. “It was an incredible opportunity. But as soon as I got pregnant, I knew what was most important was that I be there for my kids,” said Ms. Worcester, mother to Tommy, 13, and Victoria, 10.

When she was asked to direct the faltering Pilot Pen in 1998, she agreed, as long as the hours were flexible.

In addition to her role as tournament director, Ms. Worcester is the chief marketing officer of Market New Haven, which works for Yale, the city and local businesses promoting New Haven.

While publicizing events like summer concerts on the New Haven Green and the annual International Festival of Arts and Ideas are among her responsibilities, attending them is not. But she goes to them all. “I love New Haven and the fact that people can have such a great time here,” said Ms. Worcester, who spent a recent Saturday night on the Green on the conga line with the band the Squirrel Nut Zippers.

Mayor [John DeStefano](#) calls Ms. Worcester’s expertise and enthusiasm “incredible”: “She’s an important part of what makes our city so fabulous.”

Her bosses credit her with taking the Pilot Pen from an unknown tournament that attracted fewer than 50,000 fans to a premier event. It will be televised this year by CBS and ESPN2 and will be seen in 50 countries.

“She has been an important factor in the renaissance of New Haven and has made the tennis tournament the high-profile event it has become,” said Bruce Alexander, the chairman of Market New Haven and a vice president of Yale University.

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