

DONEVA, Ralitzza July 1st, 1993 MN Peel B'co. Bk.

SPORTS

## At the SunLife Nationals

July 1-93 MN

Doneva

# Doneva hoping to upset some people

By DAVID WINER  
Sports Editor

Should Ralitzza Doneva's level of play in tennis improve as dramatically as her grasp of the English language, the 17-year-old Mississaugan will become a household name perhaps as soon as next week.

Flashing the warm smile that has led to some modelling opportunities, the transplanted Bulgarian first and foremost wants to become a contender in Canadian tennis circles.

The Ontario Racquet Club member's first major opportunity will come this week during the \$100,000 SunLife Nationals.

Should she survive her first round match against Melanie Bernard of Quebec this weekend, Doneva would have the unenviable task of facing No. 1 seed Patricia Hy, who recently returned from Wimbledon where she reached the third round before being downed by Martina Navratilova.

Fluent in Russian and Croatian and rapidly picking up the English dialogue, the 5-foot-4, 118-pound Doneva is already well aware of the phrase "one step at a time."

Instead of talking about the difficult task of defeating Hy, who was a finalist last year and champion the year before, Doneva has to come up with a way to defeat Bernard.

Doneva has played Bernard just once. After losing the opening set 7-5 in that March meeting, Doneva seemed in control when she tied

the match with an easy 6-1 victory. After taking a 2-0 lead in the third and deciding set, Doneva admitted she was caught off guard with Bernard's switch in strategies that led to a 6-3 loss.

"She became really aggressive. She came to the net for most of her points," said Doneva. "When I was up 2-0, I thought the game was over."

On the bright side, Doneva states, "After playing once, I know how she plays. I will not let mistakes happen again."

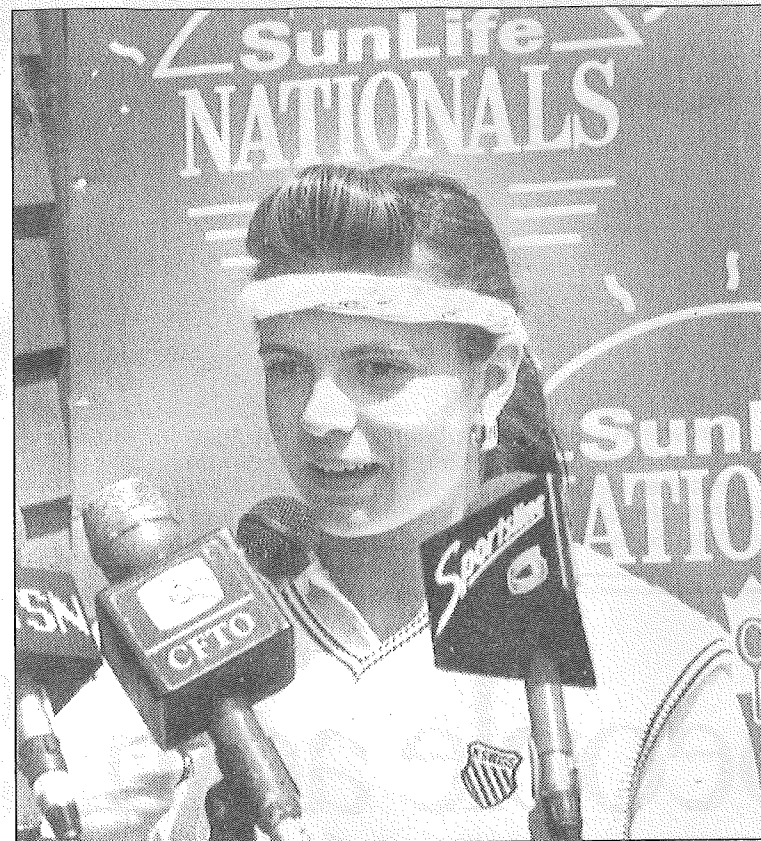
Most recently, the No. 1 seeded under-14 and under-16 player from Bulgaria has begun to show signs of stardom on this side of the ocean never dropping a match in winning the under-18 Rolex circuit championship this year while also picking up her first Women's Tennis Association ranking points at the K-Swiss Challenger last month in Collingwood.

Doneva, her fans at the ORC, sponsor Iggy Kaneff and coach Dudy Petrovic hope those signs of stardom continue this week after a two-year wait on the sidelines of the SunLife Nationals until receiving her landed immigrant status in January.

"After watching them, I know the way they play."

And Doneva realizes the way she must play is to be more aggressive at the net and work on her volleys.

Trading in that contagious smile for the dogged determination she displays on the court, may just help Doneva pull off an upset, or two.



Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Ralitzza Doneva hopes to attract some media attention at the upcoming SunLife Nationals at Ontario Racquet Club.

Tickets for the SunLife, scheduled for July 3-11, range from \$4 for the early rounds to \$12 for the finals. They may be purchased at TicketMaster outlets or by telephoning 872-5000. Special theme

day tickets ('Family Day' Monday, July 5 and 'Mississauga Day' Wednesday, July 7) are on sale at the Ontario Racquet Club at 884 Southdown Road or by telephoning 822-5240.