



James Blake returns to Olivier Rochus during the second round of the U.S. Open Thursday in New York. No. 21 Blake, a former Fairfield scholastic standout, defeated Olivier Rochus of Belgium, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (6) 6-3.

Summer of '09 a good one in Norwalk

From B1

sibly find with the Norwalk Babe Ruth program is they've set the bar so high for the past decade or so (see last year). The goal is always to win New England and go to a World Series. Anything less is almost viewed as a disappointment by some.

Not in this column, however. Two state championships by our 14- and 15-year-old teams and a district title by the 13s was one of the highlights of the summer. And even though the 14s and 15s were three-and-done at their respective New England Regional, playing about 10 miles apart in Rhode Island made the summer even more special.

Heck, in some towns, any one of our three teams would have been honored with a parade for what they did.

Of course, Norwalk only throws parades for its World Series champs.

3. Norwalk Little League wins Kinlock — This story was much bigger than just one of the local youth baseball leagues winning the annual city-wide round-robin tournament.

Dominated by Cranbury and West Norwalk the first 34 years of the tourney, the upstart Norwalk LL all-stars relegated both to the role of also-rans this year.

Even more significant, however, is the fact that it was Norwalk Little League's first Kinlock crown since three former Little League organizations in town merged to become one in 2007. This summer, in only its third year, the people behind

that decision were not only proven right, but the new and improved league showed it no longer has to take a back seat to the city's other heavyweights.

And while we're on the subject, put a star next to Norwalk Little League's thrilling 9-7, nine-inning victory over Cal Ripken in which the two teams combined to hit nine — yes, nine — home runs. That was one for the ages.

4. 'Sports in Norwalk' exhibit — Forget the summer's top-10 highlights. A history of the city's top sports highlights, some going back to the early 1900s, are on display all under one roof at the Norwalk Museum in SoNo.

The exhibit opened in June and has run all summer, continuing into January. There's more than just summer sports to choose from, too.

Where else can a winter sport like hockey be in the spotlight in July as it was one Sunday afternoon when former members of the Home Oilers, Norwalk's semi-pro hockey team in the 1960s and '70s, were on hand to meet, greet and sign autographs for fans in front of the Home Oilers display (one of the best ones there, by the way). Their former coach, Pete Correnty of Norwalk, was also there.

About the only thing missing were the boards from the ol' Crystal Rink.

5. Senior Olympian Mary Roman — Norwalk's ageless wonder certainly had a summer to remember.

Roman won four gold medals in the women's 70-74 age group at the Outdoor Track and Field Regional Championships in June at Springfield, added three more golds, a silver and a bronze at the Masters Outdoor Championships in July at Oshkosh, and won a silver medal in August at the Senior Olympic Games in Palo Alto, Calif. That's seven gold medals, two silvers and a bronze in three months.

And as if Roman's summer wasn't already grand enough, the Fairfield County Sports Commission announced this week she had been selected as Norwalk's Sports Person of the Year.

Some sports stories just get better with age.

6. Local soccer team goes international — This was not only one of the best stories of the summer, but maybe the year. The Norwalk Tides U-15 girls soccer team

was invited to play a team from Lima, Peru, in the 2009 Americana Soccer Friendship Tournament at the University of Bridgeport.

That alone would have been a home run for the Tides and the entire Norwalk Junior Soccer Association. But then the team made up mostly of players from Brien McMahon and Norwalk High went out and posted a 1-0 win over the JC Sports Girls, who were 2-0 (outscoring the opposition 14-2) since arriving from Peru, and reportedly had not lost since 2003. What's more, their goalie is a member of Peruvian U-15 national team.

7. Nutmeggers shine — Mary Roman wasn't the only one from Norwalk burning up the track this summer. The Norwalk Striders Youth Track Club had its best showing ever at the Nutmeg State Games held at Danbury High School. In only their fifth year, the Striders captured a total of 24 medals, including nine gold, five silver, and 10 bronze.

With enrollment going up every year, the local track club is only going to grow and get better, which should make future summers around here a lot of fun for years to come.

8. Jerry Jr. turns 50 — Jerry Courville Jr. finally became old enough to play in senior golf events and he didn't waste any time introducing himself, winning four of the first five events he entered — including the Connecticut Senior Open — and finishing runner-up in the other.

But the highlight came in mid-July when he won a qualifier in Massachusetts to earn a ticket to the 2009 U.S. Senior Open in Indiana at the end of the month. The Shorehaven golfer then shot a 1-under 71 in the first round (only 24 golfers shot better) and followed that up with a 73 the next day to make the cut, and fired a 3-under 69 in Sunday's final round to tie for 28th place overall at 1-under.

And just last week, Courville finished second at the 94th Met Open Championship, just one stroke behind former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's little boy.

An honorable mention also goes to Chris Giolitto, who won a second consecutive Oak Hills men's championship last week. While the golf spotlight centered on local golfers in the U.S. Am and U.S.

Senior Open, Giolitto's summer flew under the radar. All the former Norwalk High golfer did was rally from five down after 14 holes to win the 36-hole match-play final by five, a 10-hole turnaround. Good stuff.

9. City of all-stars — Norwalk was home to some pretty good baseball this summer, and not just its own local players. The city played host to several all-star tournaments, including the Babe Ruth 14-year-old state tournament at Brien McMahon (which Norwalk won) and the Cal Ripken 11-year-old states at Veterans Park.

Throw in the PONY Bronco Sectionals hosted by Cranbury, the Babe Ruth 15-year-old district tournament at McMahon, and the Cal Ripken 11-year-old districts at Fox Run, and it's pretty clear Norwalk was the place to be for local baseball fans and out-of-towners alike.

Also, kudos to the city's work crews for keeping up with all the fields during some soggy tournament weather.

10. Veterans for Veterans — The actual date was June 13, a week before summer actually arrived, but close enough. Besides, this event belongs in everyone's top 10 regardless of what time of year it is.

Thanks to the efforts of Joan Carneglia Evon, a former All-City softball player at Norwalk High, a bunch of veteran athletes from all three local high schools — NHS, McMahon and Central Catholic — during the 1970s, '80s and '90s, held a big reunion/dinner dance at a sold-out Westport VFW. Ray Barry, who coached many of them, was also in the building.

The theme was veteran athletes supporting veterans of war. Several war veterans who belong to the VFW — Veterans of Foreign War — were in attendance.

The evening also included a special ceremony honoring the late Ed Luczkowski Sr. and Sal Trombetta Sr., both veterans and former local standout athletes.

Current U.S. soldiers were also remembered. Proceeds and donated items went toward putting together and shipping care packages to U.S. troops in Iraq.

The whole night was so successful that plans are already in the works for another one next year. Only this time in a bigger place so no one is turned away.

Teenager stuns Dementieva

From B1

she can play with these girls now."

Jankovic made another early departure from a Grand Slam event Thursday, losing to 55th-ranked Yaroslava Shvedova of Kazakhstan 6-3, 6-7 (4), 7-6 (6). Jankovic reached the U.S. Open final in 2008, and she was seeded No. 5 this year, but her head might not have been focused on the court on this day: Her grandmother died Wednesday night.

The losses by Dementieva and Jankovic mean half of the top 20 seeded women are out of the draw. No. 23 Sabine Lisicki also is gone, having left in tears as she was taken away in a wheelchair after injuring her ankle at the end of a 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 defeat against Anastasia Rodionova.

No. 1 Dinara Safina nearly joined the parade of surprising exits, turning in her second poor performance of the week

before hanging on to edge 67th-ranked Kristina Barrois of Germany 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-3.

"Another tough day in the office," said Safina, who double-faulted 15 times, including three in the tiebreaker. "There is no problem in the technique or nothing. Just in my head."

No seeded men lost in early action Thursday. Winners included fourth-seeded Novak Djokovic of Serbia; No. 21 James Blake; 276th-ranked Jesse Witten of Naples, Fla., and No. 22 Sam Querrey of Thousand Oaks, Calif. French Open runner-up Robin Soderling advanced when his opponent, Marcel Granollers, quit during the third game with a back injury.

In the opening match of the night session, 29th-seeded former Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova of Russia breezed to a 6-2, 6-1 victory over another American teenager, Christina McHale.

SEPTEMBER 11, 12 AND 13, 2009
AT NORWALK'S VETERANS PARK

Festival Hours

Friday, Sept. 11
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Saturday, Sept. 12
11:00 AM to 11:00 PM

Sunday, Sept. 13
11:00 AM to 8:00 PM

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Don't miss...



Pesky NBA star Bowen retires

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Bruce Bowen won't be pestering the NBA's best anymore.

The 38-year-old former San Antonio Spurs forward retired Thursday after 12 seasons and a reputation as one of the league's most menacing defenders, hounding opponents with a tenacity that some players groused was more dirty than dogged.

He called it quits after being waived this summer by Milwaukee, where the Spurs dealt him in a veteran dump-off for swingman Richard Jefferson — a decision Bowen said he understood.

"You need to do things to better the business, and the Spurs definitely got better in the players they received, so I'm looking forward to continuously supporting the Spurs, but from more of a distance now," he said.

"It's Politics!"

Op-ed, every Sunday in

The Hour

Editor Emeritus, John P. Reilly, takes a look at the local political scene and comments on the high- and low- points of the sometimes silly, always interesting, situations.