

## GOOD NIGHT IRENE!

Contributed by Bob Phillips  
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{mosimage images/stories/201108/wozniackimchale380.jpg}Strongest hurricane in almost 30 years wreaks havoc on sports schedules throughout area.

Bill Harper

NEW HAVEN &ndash; Governor Dannel P. Malloy has issued a state of emergency for the entire state of Connecticut in advance of Hurricane Irene, which is expected to hit the Nutmeg State shoreline dead-on sometime on Sunday as a Category 1 or 2 storm with sustained wind gusts of anywhere between 74-110 miles per hour (with gusts even higher), and torrential rains that may create a storm surge of 8-to-10 feet along the coast. Not since Hurricane Gloria in the mid-80s has a storm of this magnitude threatened Connecticut.

Of particular concern to area sports fans are the singles finals of the New Haven Open, a WTA/US Open Series event being held at the Connecticut Tennis Center at Yale University. Originally scheduled for a 5 p.m. start, the match has been pushed up to 1 p.m. to create a sufficient window for everyone to get the heck out of town after the final point (although the athletes are headed into New York City which doesn't make a whole lot of since as they will be literally headed into the eye of a hurricane).

The match, originally scheduled to be televised live on ESPN2, now will be webcast live on ESPN3.com, and will be telecast in its originally scheduled 5 p.m. time slot on ESPN2 on a tape-delayed basis.

The WTA women's doubles and USTA national mixed doubles finals will also be held on Saturday. For a complete listing of start times, visit the New Haven Open website.

Friday's semifinals are not affected by the impending catastrophic storm.

Not before 2 p.m., Li Na of China, the tourney's second seed, a 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 winner over Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia in the quarterfinals on Thursday, will take on Petra Cetkovska of the Czech Republic. Cetkovska, a qualifier in the tournament ranked No. 40 in the world, advanced by upsetting fourth-seeded Marion Bartoli of France 7-5, 7-5 on Thursday.

Then, not before 7 p.m., the tournament's top seed (and No. 1 ranked women's tennis player in the world) Caroline Wozniacki will take on third-seeded Francesca Schiavone of Italy. Both matches will be televised live on ESPN2. Wozniacki, who is trying to tie Venus Williams' record of four-straight championships in New Haven, has never lost a match here. Last night, she rolled past 19-year-old Christina McHale, the only American in the field, in straight sets (7-5, 6-3).

Also unaffected by Irene will be Diana Taurasi's return to Connecticut when her Phoenix Mercury take on the Connecticut Sun Friday night at 7:30 p.m. at the Mohegan Sun Arena. For fans unable to attend, the game will be televised on Comcast Sports New England (CS-NE) and webcast live on WNBA Live Access.

Also affected is the annual Giants-Jets preseason football game at the Meadowlands Stadium in New Jersey. Kickoff, originally scheduled for 7 p.m., has been pushed up to 2 p.m.

"We moved the start time based on the weather forecast and to give everybody an opportunity to get home safely after the game," said Giants president and CEO John Mara. "There are, obviously, many issues to consider. Our players played a game on Monday night, the stadium personnel has to secure the building post-game and, most importantly, the safety and welfare of Giants and Jets fans. We felt like this is the right thing to do."

Gee thanks.

For more information on the impending storm, or to track the latest track of Hurricane Irene (and locate its projected path by zip code), visit CTNow.

&ndash;Kristine Phillips contributed to this report