

Mats may be out of his depth



The waiting game . . . Mats Wilander and his wife, Sonya, play backgammon

MATS WILANDER will soon have one thing in common with Ivan Lendl — a luxury home in Connecticut. And it is only a few minutes walk from the reclusive world champion's.

But that may be the closest the Swede will get to Lendl who, these days, seems streets ahead of the opposition.

The pair meet today in the rain-delayed final of the US Open tennis championships and everything points to the Czech claiming a hat-trick of successes at Flushing Meadow.

Wilander and his wife, Sonya, are close to becoming neighbours of Lendl in Greenwich, — a tranquil Connecticut location that matches Belgravia for millionaire residents.

Before Wilander gets the keys to his new one million-dollar home he has the unneighbourly act of

from Peter Blackman in New York

trying to unlock Lendl's grip in an event that carries a £160,000 first prize.

Wilander knows the road against Lendl will probably be long and hard just the way it was, in fact, when Lendl beat him this summer in the final of the French Open at Roland Garros.

"I still haven't made up my mind how to tackle Lendl this time," said Wilander. "One thing is for sure I must be careful going to the net because he passes so well."

Wilander is, perhaps, the strongest-willed performer on the tennis tour and he showed that quality when he staged a locker-room sit-in before his semi-final against Stefan Edberg because he objected to a 10 am start.

That side of Wilander's character worries Lendl who is also amazed at the Swede's view of holding down the world No. 1 position.

Wilander said: "I don't want to be No. 1. I think if you feel you are the best that's enough. All the other bits are a hassle. The only thing on my mind is winning tournaments—and the U.S. Open would be fine."

The unflappable Wilander has won five tournaments this year and he goes into this final having won 60 of his 71 matches. But Lendl is even more consistent.

Power

He has a 21-match winning streak and his last defeat was against Pat Cash in the singles final at Wimbledon. A deeper examination of his record reveals that he has won 41 of his last 43 matches.

Nonstop rain wrecked yesterday's programme and ruined any chance of either Lendl or Wilander working out for today's second attempt that points strongly to Lendl completing a notable hat-trick.

Martina Navratilova, meanwhile, has made sure that Steffi Graf knows that she is not a spent force by winning the women's singles title with a brilliant display of power tennis.

Graf remains the world No. 1 but until Navratilova quits the teenager from West Germany knows that day in, day out, Navratilova will have her in her sights.