

Sampras tops absentees' list



AFP, London

The tennis carnival rolls into Wimbledon on Monday but for the first time in 15 years Pete Sampras will not be walking through the All England Club gates.

The seven-times champion tops a list of notable absentees from this year's event but having ruled the grasscourt Grand Slam for almost a decade, the American's non appearance has left a gaping hole in the men's competition.

Two other previous champions -- injury-prone Goran Ivanisevic and Richard Krajicek, who retired on Thursday -- have also joined the missing list.

Other major winners staying away from London over the next fortnight include 2000 US Open champion Marat Safin, former French Open winners Carlos Moya and Albert Costa, and 2002 Australian Open champ Thomas Johansson.

With Germany's Tommy Haas, twice Roland Garros runner-up Alex Corretja, former world number one Marcelo Rios and Magnus Norman also absent, it is the first time since the 1973 Wimbledon boycott that so many top players are missing from the men's field.

Thirty years ago more than 70 contenders skipped the event in protest over the Nikki Piliic affair but in 2003 the excuses run from the birth of a new baby, for Corretja, to a lack of expertise on the slick surface.

The women's competition has also been depleted with the withdrawals of nine-times grand slam winner Monica Seles, last year's

semi-finalist Amelie Mauresmo and Russian media darling Anna Kournikova.

Sampras, who captured his last Wimbledon title in 2000, decided in May to skip the tournament as he felt his form was not up to standard.

The American was left shattered 12 months ago when he was beaten in the second round by lucky loser George Bastl. At the time Sampras vowed that he was not prepared to leave the Wimbledon stage after such a demoralising loss on court two.

But following an unexpected and emotional charge to his 14th grand slam title at the U.S. Open last September, the 31-year-old has lacked the motivation to play competitively.

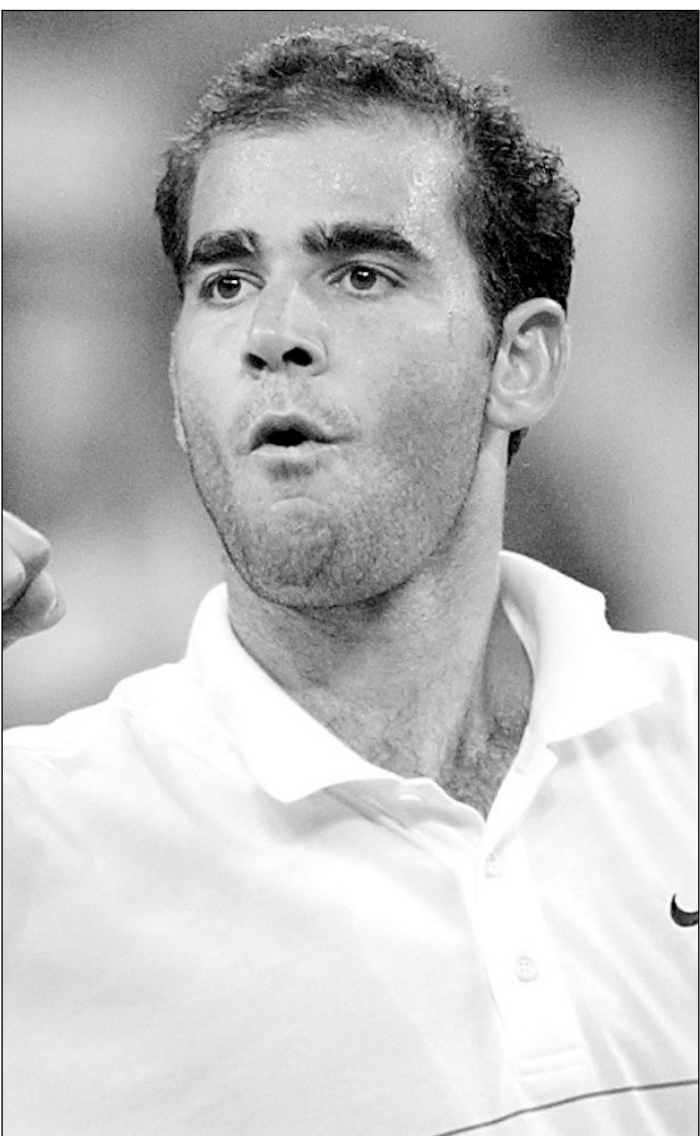
Having been beaten only once from 1993 to 2000 -- in the 1996 quarterfinals by eventual champion Krajicek -- Sampras' place in Wimbledon history is assured.

"When Pete started his run at Wimbledon, you weren't convinced he was going to win the next year," said Andre Agassi, who was beaten by Sampras both times the pair met at the championships.

"It wasn't till he won two or three that you started to realise this guy is a bit of a problem now...but what he's done is unbelievable."

Kournikova, who is more renowned for her looks than her on-court prowess, aggravated a back injury two weeks ago while Seles has struggled with foot problems all season.

Despite Kournikova's absence, the glamour quotient at the tournament should be fulfilled by her compatriot Maria Sharapova and American teenager Ashley Harkleroad, who are set to make their Wimbledon debuts.



PETE SAMPRAS

Rusedski thru'

AFP, Nottingham

Greg Rusedski put his injury nightmare behind him and gave his Wimbledon preparations a shot in the arm by advancing to his first final in almost a year here on Friday.

The British number two swept Morocco's Hicham Arazi aside 7-5, 7-5 in straight sets to give himself a shot at a 13th career title.

Saturday's final against American Mardy Fish will be Rusedski's first since he won at Indianapolis last summer. Fish, the eighth seed, set up his first meeting with the Briton by ousting defending champion Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden 6-7, 6-3, 6-4. Canadian-born left-hander Rusedski has only just resumed competitive tennis after undergoing foot and knee surgery at the end of last year.

He even recently admitted that he had thought of quitting after a neck injury derailed his recovery plans.

But the return to the grass appears to have lifted his spirits and he is now looking forward to mounting a serious challenge when Wimbledon gets underway next week.

Tigers fly

FROM PAGE 13 expectation and said that his targets at the moment were to speed up the team's progress and improve skills.

"It's an ongoing process and a slow process. It doesn't happen overnight. So, to get the results we'll have to be patient for a number of months not just the next two months."

Understandably, nobody expects a victory against the formidable Australians. But our cricketers can still win the hearts and minds by displaying some fighting spirit. By spirit we mean converting a fighting fifty into a magnificent hundred and putting a price on each member of the Bangladesh team's wicket. Though our bowlers lack the sting, but they should try to be as disciplined as Glenn McGrath. And in the field the slogan should be save a run that you could not score.

Bangladesh will have a two-week pre tour camp in Brisbane before flying to Darwin to play the first Test on July 18-22.

The second Test will start at Cairns on July 25. Cairns will also host the first and second one-day on August 2 and 3. The third and final one-day match will be held in Darwin on August 6.

BANGLADESH SQUAD: Khaled Mahmud (captain), Habibul Bashar, Al-Shahriar, Hannan Sarkar, Javed Omar, Mohammad Ashraful, Alok Kapali, Sanwar Hossain, Khaled Mashud (wicketkeeper), Mohammad Rafique, Manjarul Islam, Tapas Baishya, Mashrafebin Mortaza, Tareq Aziz Khan and Anwar Hossain.

Dav Whatmore (coach), Lt. Col. (ret) MA Latif (manager), John Gloster (physio), Dean Woodford (trainer) and Nasir Ahmed (computer analyst).

Mariner in last

FROM PAGE 13 from the long whistle. Parvez scored the other goal in the 64th minute.

S BIMA 2, FARASHGANJ 0 Sadharan Bima rode on two second half goals from Hasan to beat Farashganj Sporting Club in an inconsequential match.

Hasan broke the afternoon's duck with a field goal in the 42nd minute. He took another three minutes to score his second. The match left only an academic interest as both teams had earlier confirmed their exit from the preliminary round.

Govou saves

FROM PAGE 13 Inamoto, a two-goal wonder for Japan at the World Cup, will surely have rued that incident for if anything Japan had had more of the possession and were marginally the better side up to then.

France coach Jacques Santini made his first substitution with over half an hour to go, ignoring the persistent urgings from the terraces for Thierry Henry to make an appearance and instead replacing Olivier Dacourt with Benoit Pedretti. Then came Nakamura's equaliser, his freekick soaring over the French defensive wall and into the right hand corner of Barthez' goal.

But France did not take long to restore their lead, with Govou deftly controlling a long ball which found him dangerously positioned in the box. The slippery Lyon striker wasted not a second in firing a left-footed shot past Narazaki.

Nakata squandered a great chance to bring the score level shortly after but his volley, after a cross from the right, floated inches over the crossbar.

Amazingly Japan were then awarded a freekick from an identical position to where Nakamura had scored from and Zico's side went agonisingly close to a repeat when Endo's curler rebounded off the left-hand post.

Nakamura had several more close calls but France held on in front of 33,000 happy supporters to extend their unbeaten run against Japan to five matches.

Latif won't push panic button



AFP, London

Pakistan captain Rashid Latif refused to panic after seeing his side go down to a seven wicket defeat against England in the second one-day international at The Oval here Friday.

Pakistan were bowled out for just 185 with England fast bowler James Anderson finishing the innings with a hat-trick.

"It's a very inexperienced side," said Latif.

"England bowled and fielded superbly. I'm satisfied with the batting," the wicketkeeper added.

In reply Marcus Trescothick's 55-ball 86 saw England to victory with 28 overs to spare as they squared the three-match series at 1-1 ahead of Sunday's finale at Lord's.

Pakistan, with fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar back in the side after missing their victory in Tuesday's opener at Old Trafford - where he completed a two-game ban for ball-tampering - were always up against it after being dismissed with six overs of their innings left.

"The difference was our bowlers tried to bowl fast but the England bowlers relied on line and length, a little bit of swing and they were successful," Latif explained.

Anderson, 20, who also took a

wicket with the first ball of the match, finished with four for 27, his best figures in one-day internationals, surpassing the four for 29 he took against Pakistan in Cape Town at the World Cup.

"Anderson is a good prospect for



RASHID LATIF

England," Latif added. "He struggled a bit early on in the first match but he's bowled superbly in both matches."

Vaughan, savouring his first one-day international win as England captain, was understandably pleased by the team's display. "It was probably a 100 per cent performance. There was not much wrong with it."

"We got a little momentum from the second half of the other day

(Pakistan scraped home by two wickets at Old Trafford) and I told the lads we had to maintain it.

"You can't maintain it better than taking a wicket first ball."

But Vaughan said Anderson needed no morale-boosting words from his captain.

"You don't say too much to him. He's got the knack of being able to bowl the right delivery at the right time. He's got a good cricket brain on him and takes everything in his stride," Vaughan explained.

"He's a pretty cool character and only speaks when he wants to."

S o m e r s e t l e f t - h a n d e r Trescothick, England's hero with the bat, said of his innings: "It was just a case of getting on top of the bowlers."

"That's my job in the side the first 15 overs," the opener added.

Trescothick hailed Shoaib and Mohammad Sami as the fastest new-ball attack in world cricket today.

"They bowled some quick deliveries. Shoaib's very aggressive."

"If you let him into the game he can dominate," insisted Trescothick after the 'Rawalpindi Express' finished with an expensive two for 69 from nine overs.

Looking ahead Vaughan said he could not wait for the climax of the series. "Sunday is a Cup final. It should be a fantastic game."

Carlisle out of tri-series

REUTERS, London

Zimbabwe batsman Stuart Carlisle was ruled out of a triangular series against England and South Africa on Friday after undergoing surgery on his broken right thumb.

The 31-year-old Carlisle spent Thursday night in hospital after suffering the fracture fielding against Somerset on Tuesday.

He will be sidelined for between three to six weeks. Carlisle, who had made three centuries on tour, played in the just-concluded test series against England, won 2-0 by the home team.

"Stuart has been our most prolific batsman and is probably playing as well as at any time in his career," said Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak.

Streak said Stuart Matsikenyeri was in line to replace Carlisle in the side. The 10-match triangular series begins on Thursday, June 26, with Zimbabwe meeting England at Trent Bridge.

Drawing a line

FROM PAGE 13 A further umpiring aid, earphones linked to stump microphones, will undoubtedly assist in the detection of faint edges, and that great deceiver bat-on-pad for that matter.

Intriguingly, the ICC is contemplating whether to increase the number of on-field umpires from two to three.

The third would probably be stationed in a position to monitor no-balls, leaving the umpire at the non-striker's end free to concentrate on the batsman and those pretty white lines.

"Other sports have a larger number of umpires, who are occupied for a shorter length of time," said Malcolm Speed, the ICC's chief executive.

"We want to minimise mistakes." And the white line fever that can follow them, no doubt.

Cricket's Beckham!

AFP, London

James Anderson, dubbed the 'David Beckham of English cricket', said Friday he had no wish to be as famous as the Real Madrid-bound football star.

Anderson, 20, produced a match-winning performance of which the England football captain would have been proud, becoming the first England bowler to take a hat-trick in a one-day international as Michael Vaughan's men beat Pakistan by seven wickets here at The Oval.

The result levelled the three-match series at 1-1 ahead of Sunday's encounter at Lord's.

But Lancashire pacesman Anderson said Beckham-style fame was not for him. "I'm not sure I'd like as much pressure and attention as David Beckham gets."

"This is cricket and I don't think it's followed as much as football," added Anderson whose hat-trick ended the Pakistan innings on 185. "But if kids want to play cricket because of me than I am happy with that."

Reflecting on his bowling, Anderson said: "The ball is coming out well at the moment. I was just trying to hit the stumps, especially with the number 10 and 11.

"I tried to pitch all three balls as full as possible," explained Anderson, who had Abdul Razzaq caught at mid-off and Shoaib Akhtar caught behind before clean bowling

last man Mohammad Sami with a speedy yorker.

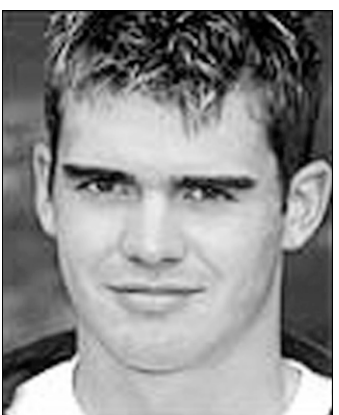
Earlier in the innings Darren Gough was on a hat-trick and Anderson said: "When Gough was on his hat-trick the noise around the ground was incredible.

"It gave me goose bumps when I ran into bowl my hat-trick ball. Everything went crazy when it came off," added Anderson, who also took a wicket with the first ball of the match on his way to one-day international best figures of four for 27.

"Some experienced bowlers have told me they've never had one (a hat-trick) and now I've got two in a season (against Essex with England Test captain Nasser Hussain one of the victims).

"I suppose there's a bit of luck involved," admitted Anderson, whose return surpassed his previous one-day international best of four for 29 against Pakistan at the World Cup in Cape Town back in February.

"Sometimes I have to pinch myself. I've just got to keep my feet on the ground."



JAMES ANDERSON

Atapattu rattles WI

FROM PAGE 13 the pitch, was trapped leg-before after reaching his 11th half-century in 29 Tests.

He also became the ninth Sri Lankan to complete 2,000 Test runs during his 101-ball knock.

The West Indies' ordeal did not end after Sangakkara's dismissal as Jayawardene added 68 for the third wicket with Atapattu. He was caught by Lara off Banks after a brief interruption due to rain.

Skipper Hashan Tillakaratne (13) inside-edged a Collymore delivery on to his stumps, but there was no stopping Atapattu who continued to gather runs comfortably against both pace and spin.

The West Indies' lone success in

the morning came through Collymore, who returned to the squad after playing his only Test in 1999 against Australia in Antigua.

Jayasuriya, who failed to score a half-century in three one-dayers against the hosts recently, cut an away-going delivery from Collymore straight to Banks at gully.

Sangakkara and Atapattu then frustrated the West Indies as they took no risks during their partnership, patiently waiting for the loose deliveries to punish.

Atapattu reached his half-century in the afternoon when he turned Taylor to fine-leg for his seventh four and went on to defy the West Indies attack with his solid knock.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first cricket Test between the West Indies and Sri Lanka on Friday:

Table with columns: Team, Runs, Wickets, Extras, Total. Includes Sri Lanka (108) and West Indies (195).

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Dillon, Collymore, Taylor, Hinds, Banks, Gayle, Samuels.

Toss: Sri Lanka. Umpires: Daryl Harper (AUS) and Billy Bowden (NZL). TV umpire: Billy Doctrove (WIS). Match-referee: Wasim Raja (PAK).

ICC to hand over

FROM PAGE 13 Zealand being given 500,000 dollars of the 2.5 million dollars retained.

Sri Lanka will receive all of the 500,000 dollars withheld from their board.

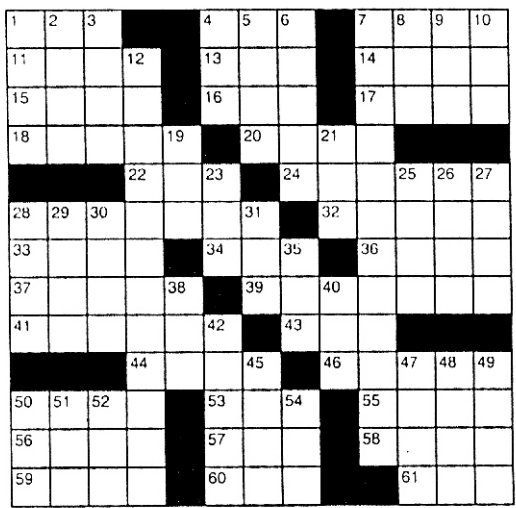
The decisions on returned payments were reached by a meeting of the ICC's commercial department in Monaco on Friday.

In a statement Ehsan Mani, who took over as ICC president at the annual meeting at Lord's earlier this week, said: "The nature of the claims allowed us to return money to three of our boards."

"In relation to the Indian Board, it is not possible at this stage to assess the likely maximum claims," Mani, formerly Pakistan's ICC representative added. "All countries made the prudent financial decision to continue to withhold the Indian board's World Cup distribution at this stage."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.



CRYPTIQUIP

P D W U I P Q D Z M D G K M M H G Z W I M G B X A M - X U F X J V J L H D X B J W C A G : " L X Q A W L W J D M W V L F M W K C M U M D " Saturday's Cryptiquip: NEW PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION SPECIFICALLY FOR PEOPLE WHO CURSE TOO MUCH: DARNITOL.

Today's Cryptiquip Clue: G equals S The Cryptiquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.