

# Swashbuckling Capriati sinks Sabatini

NEW YORK, Sept 4: Jennifer Capriati, wallop serving serves more than 100 mph (170 kph), took a giant step toward becoming the youngest US Open winner in history as she reached the semifinals by toppling defending champion Gabriela Sabatini, reports AP.

Capriati, at 15 already one of the strongest women in tennis, beat Sabatini for the first time in a full match, 6-3, 7-6 (7-1) on Tuesday, overpowering her on serves and groundstrokes, pounding back returns from midcourt and, at critical moments, lobbing with perfection.

"I have come this far, I hope I can go all the way," said Capriati, a year younger than Tracy Austin was when she won in 1979. Capriati is the

second-youngest semifinalist in US Open history, three months older than Andrea Jaeger in 1980.

Capriati next plays 17-year-old Monica Seles, a 6-1, 6-2 victor over Gigi Fernandez.

Capriati did exactly that to break Sabatini in the 11th game of the second set, taking the ball about five feet behind the service line and rapping it back harder than it arrived. Put on the defensive, Sabatini hit a forehand long to fall behind 6-5 with her third broken service of the set and fifth of the match.

"Overeager, perhaps, to finish it off, Capriati couldn't put the match away quite yet. She made several errors while suffering a break that put the set into a tiebreaker.

"Every time I used to play her before, she'd control me," Capriati said. "She would move

me side to side with her heavy topspin. I never used to attack her second serve, but now I went in with a different attitude."

Sabatini, who had beaten Capriati in their first six matches, lost only once before — in the Canadian Open last month when she retired with a blister in the middle of the second set.

"I played a very bad tiebreaker," said Sabatini, who lacked the speed, agility and confidence at the net that she showed last year in beating Steffi Graf in the final. "I missed so many balls. I played a little bit short and she was hitting very deep, attacking me, so I didn't have too many chances to come to the net."

Fernandez didn't act much like a serious threat on the court as she sprayed 36 unforced errors in her first match against Seles, who made only 10 errors.

Seles started as if she were out to break the record for fastest match of the tournament, winning the first four games in 12 minutes while not dropping a point on serve against a player appearing in her first Grand Slam quarterfinal.

"I don't think that I was so much nervous or impressed by the event as much as by her game," Fernandez said. "She came out really strong and she was jumping all over my serve and serving really well."

"She is always fighting and thinking. She is a very smart player, very tenacious, and keeps coming at you. If you look at her, you don't think she is a tennis player. She is not built like a tennis player, but her mind just keeps her in there."

Seles agreed totally with that assessment.

"I think all the great players have that," she said. "I mean, Chris, Martina, also Jimmy Connors, Mac, everybody. I think you have to have that. I mean you can't be a dead person on the court."

A brief lapse in the fifth game and a sudden spate of alert, aggressive net play by Fernandez led to a break of Seles' service at 15-40.

Fernandez finally held to start the second set, then held again after five deuces in the third game to make it 2-1. Seles ran into a little resistance with three break points in the fourth game, but pulled out the game and cruised through the next three while dropping only four points.

Serving for the match, Seles again faced a break point but was saved by still another Fernandez mistake, an easy backhand return into the net. Fernandez saved two match points but succumbed on the third with a backhand that caught the net cord and bounced back.

"Before maybe when I was playing doubles I would talk to more, but now I really couldn't say that I have anybody that I would call friends."

Fernandez, 23rd in the world, confirmed the 17-year-old Yugoslav's attitude.

"I don't think she is very popular in the locker room," said Fernandez of Seles' slight 5-foot 9 inch (1.75 m) frame. "I think her tenacity and her ability to concentrate and deal with pressure has gotten her to where she is."

Seles is not shy to rank herself with all-time greats who had renowned fighting spirit.

"I think all the great players, Chris (Evert), Martina (Navratilova), Jimmy Connors and (John) McEnroe have that," she said. "You can't be a dead person out there. The top players on the tough points are there. I definitely have that."



Monica Seles of Yugoslavia watches a return shot to Gigi Fernandez of the US on Sept 3 at the US Open in New York. Seles won the match 6-1, 6-2 to move into the semifinals.

— AFP photo

## Connors casts shadow over stars

NEW YORK, Sept 4:

Stefan Edberg, Jim Courier and Pete Sampras are peaking at the right time.

Michael Stich has

the talent to win the US Open and Ivan Lendl the will and the experience, reports Reuter.

But as the last eight men prepare for quarter-final battle, the big question at the National Tennis Centre must be: How can mere mortals — even the best tennis players in the world — hope to cope with the seemingly divine resurrection of Jimmy Connors?

Connors had said his goal was to still be playing on his birthday, but if his body holds up, he is good bet to beat unseeded Dutchman Paul Haarhuis and reach the semifinals.

"I'm just amazed at what he is doing out there," said Haarhuis, who upset an ailing Boris Becker on his way to the

Power tennis may be fash-

ionable these days, but Jimmy Connors is having fun again at the US Open. And there is absolutely nothing more enjoyable for tennis fans than Jimmy Connors having fun on his favourite stage.

"It's just another Connors miracle," the five-time champion said after reaching his 17th US Open quarter-final by taking an epic five-set marathon from Aaron Krickstein on his 29th birthday — his second miraculous come-from-behind five-set win of the tournament.

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quarters.

Haarhuis has never played a Grand Slam quarter-final and is likely to become rattled by the roiling, rollicking stadium court scene that has accompanied Connors's matches — the perfect symbiosis of artist and

his monster serve.

Lendl has not attained his best form since undergoing hand surgery in the spring and may be vulnerable.

But the three-time Open champion, whose frustration over his failure to win Wimbledon is well known, has been to the final eight times. He knows what it takes to win here and despite his statements to the contrary, he would surely like to beat this upstart Wimbledon winner on what he considers his home court.

The other quarter-final pits a pair of American Grand Slam champions in a classic matchup of serve and volley against baseliner when defending champion Pete Sampras takes on French Open winner Jim Courier.

Both are extremely confident and on top of their games and each is well capable of keeping the US crown on home soil.

Sampras, whose big weapon is his ability to unleash a 120 mph (193 kph) serve down the middle line, beat a player of Courier's style when he trounced Andre Agassi in the final last year, but Courier has won three titles this year and has the confidence that comes with a Grand Slam title.

Both rising American stars are quite happy to have been able to quietly move through the draw.

"Obviously the spotlight will be on Jimmy," Courier said of Connors. "That is as it rightfully should be because he is deserving of every bit of it."

Quarter-final line-up:

Men's singles:

Paul Haarhuis (Neth)

Jimmy Connors (USA)

Pete Sampras (USAx6)

Jim Courier (USAx4)

Michael Stich (Germany)

x 3 v Ivan Lendl (Czech x5)

Javier Sanchez (Spain)

v Stefan Edberg (Sweden x2)

## Selective Seles

NEW YORK, Sept 4:

World number two Monica Seles is not making a lot of friends on the tennis tour, reports Reuter.

"I am not going to talk to the lower-ranked players," said the second-seeded Seles after racing past unseeded Gigi Fernandez 6-1, 6-2 on Tuesday to reach the US Open semifinals.

"Before maybe when I was playing doubles I would talk to more, but now I really couldn't say that I have anybody that I would call friends."

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"I don't think she is very popular in the locker room," said Fernandez of Seles' slight 5-foot 9 inch (1.75 m) frame. "I think her tenacity and her ability to concentrate and deal with pressure has gotten her to where she is."

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"Most of the top players don't hang out. They are not friendly with anybody. They go, play and they leave and there is nothing wrong with it. This is not a popularity contest," said Fernandez of Puerto Rico.

Though Fernandez is not friendly with Seles, she admires her competitive nature.

"She doesn't look like what you think a tennis player should be built like," said Fernandez of Seles' slight 5-foot 9 inch (1.75 m) frame. "I think her tenacity and her ability to concentrate and deal with pressure has gotten her to where she is."

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Right now I can't see myself getting beaten," he said. "I've been training hard and I made the weight two weeks ago. I'm feeling good."

Galloway will prepare for the fight by training for the next 11 days in a gymnasium at Miami on the Gold Coast, 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Brisbane.

He was accompanied into Australia by sparring partner Louis Howard and trainer Al McCoy.

"Manning is in better shape than he's ever been," said McCoy. "He's not taking Malcolm lightly. He's here to fight."

Malcolm has had 79 wins, 21 losses and 10 draws since starting to fight professionally as a 15-year-old. He splits his time between Australia and a home in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Bridge results

The following are the team standings in victory points after six rounds of play in the 14-round super league of Metropolis bridge league which is now being held at the Bangladesh Bank Club premises, according to a press release of Dhaka Metropolis Bridge Association.

1. Motijheel Colony Club — White (66); 2. Azimpur — Blue (66); 3. Alpha (50); 4. M.A. Mannan's team (50); 5. ABC (44); 6. Bridge Pair (39); 7. Bangladesh Bank Club — Red (26) and 8. Barnali Sangbad (16).

The remaining matches of the league will be played on September 15 (2 rounds), September 16 (3 rounds) and September 12 (2 rounds).



Ear bashing.... John McEnroe collapses after a ball hit by Glenn Lyndecker struck the side of his head during their first round game in US Open on August 27. McEnroe won 6-4, 6-3, 6-3.

## Kenyans won't run in SA

NAIROBI, Sept 4: Kenya's world beating distance runners will not compete in South African next month, senior sports officials said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"It is too early to go to South Africa. We can afford to wait a little longer for the complete dismantling of apartheid," said Robert Ouka, administrative secretary of the Kenya National Sports Council.

International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) President Primo Nebiolo said in Tokyo last week the IAAF council and African athletics leaders had agreed to stage two track and field meetings featuring South African athletes after this month's All Africa Games in Egypt.

The events, the African Unity Games, are to be held in

Shishu Kunja School champs

JHENDAH, Sept 4: Shishu Kunja High School became champions in the inter-school and madrasa football competition-91 of Jhenadh Sadar upazila beating Al-Hera Islamic Institute by 3-0 goals on Monday, reports UNB.

Enamul Huq of Shishu Kunja High School was adjudged the best player in the competition held at Jhenadh Government Boys' High School ground.

Sadar Upazila Chairman Noor Mohammad distributed prizes among the winners.

In the DC Gold Cup football tournament-91, played at the local stadium on the same day Rajbari eleven beat Khulna Cosmos eleven by 2-1 goals.

Previous attempts by Polish, American and British teams to scale the north ridge of the mountain in Pakistan's Karakorum range all failed.

K-2 conquered without oxygen

ISLAMABAD, Sept 3: The world's second highest mountain, K-2 in Pakistan, has been conquered from the north ridge for the first time by two French mountaineers, reports Reuter.

"Climbing K-2 was the dream of my life that came true," Pierre Beghin, 40, the leader of the four-member team, told Pakistan's official APP news agency on Tuesday before a leaving for France.

Beghin was accompanied by Christophe Profit during the final assault on August 15, their third attempt on the 8,611 metre (28,250 ft) peak without oxygen or ropes.

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