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Sampras too good for Becker

ROME. May 16: World number one Pete Sampras confirmed his supremacy in men's tennis when he humbled triple Wimbledon champion Boris Becker in straight sets to win the Italian Open on Sunday, reports Reuter.

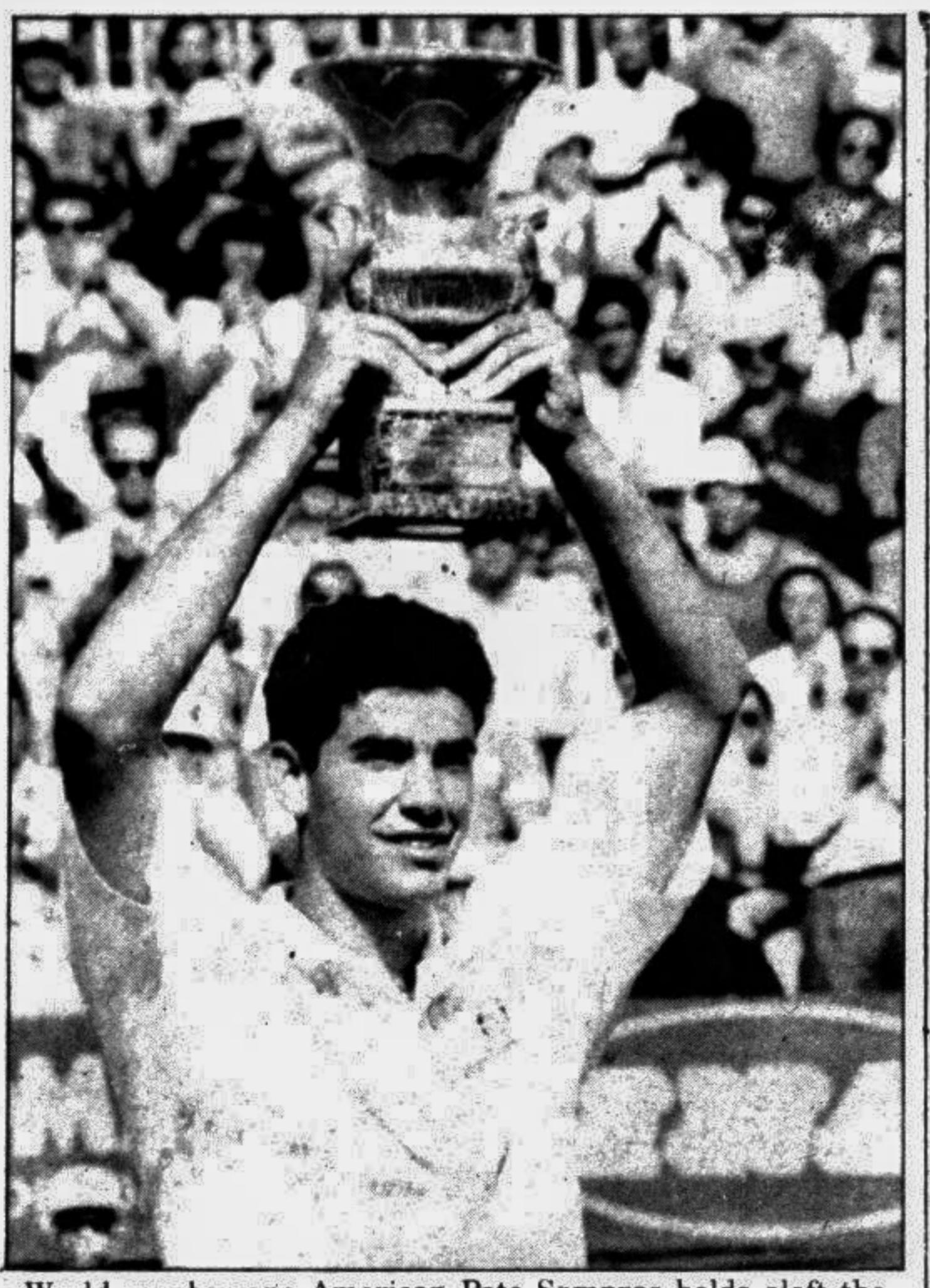
Playing his first clay tournament of the season, Sampras took just one hour 52 minutes to win 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 and extended his winning streak to 27 matches as Becker's game came apart at the seams.

"Right now, he's flying. He thinks he's invincible ... he's playing tennis like no one has ever played against me. I can only compare him to the best of the best," Becker said of his American conqueror.

The 22-year-old Sampras, who appeared calm and collected after the match, waxed philosophically about being the world's top player after claiming his seventh title of the season.

"I try not to think about points and rankings. I just try and enjoy it and not be too concerned about being number one," said the Greek-American.

Becker, who has played in four clay court finals in his career but lost them all, said he hoped Sampras would win the French Open beginning as May 23 to become the first player since Rod Laver in 1969 to triumph in four successive Grand Slam events.



World number one American Pete Sampras holds aloft the trophy after winning the Italian Open men's final in Rome on Sunday. Sampras defeated Germany's Boris Becker in straight sets. — AFP photo

Mattar blazes with aces

CORAL SPRINGS, Florida, May 16: Luiz Mattar won his first title outside his native Brazil when he beat Jamie Morgan of Australia in the final of the 240,000 dollar America's Red Clay tennis championship on Sunday, but he isn't expecting much notice back home, reports Reuter.

Mattar, the sixth seed secured a sterling 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 victory over his seventh-seeded opponent.

The 56th-ranked Brazilian, winner of seven career titles, knows his countrymen have been mourning the death of Formula One driver Ayrton Senna two weeks ago in Monte Carlo, and he also knows tennis must take a back seat to soccer in this World Cup season.

Mattar, who earned 18,250 dollars reluctantly admitted to being tired Sunday following his three-hour, five-minute semifinal match against

Brazilian Fernando Meligeni late Saturday night. He didn't get to bed until 2:30 am and was up at 8:30 am to practice.

Mattar's big advantage over Morgan is that he can play from the backcourt as well as the net. Morgan is primarily comfortable serving and volleying and was in trouble when Mattar kept him from moving forward.

Mattar took the first set with a service break in the ninth game.

The sixth game of the second set was instrumental in Morgan pulling even to one-setter all. At 30-30 in that game,

Mattar took an early 2-0 lead in the third set when Morgan smacked a forehand long and double faulted at deuce in the second game.

Mattar served out the match with four stylish points — a backhand crosscourt volley, his fifth ace of the match, a service winner and an unreturnable backhand.

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Beautiful, that's beautiful," Mattar said when told of his commanding edge in the statistic.

Morgan, who has failed to win any of the three career Finals he has contested, was equally impressed.

"That's a pretty good effort," said Morgan, who served 16 aces Sunday. "Obviously, the guy played well. I played 100 percent and on the day he was a little better."

Morgan, who earned 18,250 dollars reluctantly admitted to being tired Sunday following his three-hour, five-minute semifinal match against

Young, without a half century in his six previous tour innings, blossomed after a gentle start. He struck 10 boundaries before edging a catch behind off Mark Bowen when only two runs were wanted for victory.

Crowe may well find himself opening again in Thursday's first one-day international at Edgbaston.

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