



Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda giving away the trophy to Brothers Union captain after the final of the MA Khan memorial tournament yesterday. Brothers beat Ansars 17-14.

— Star photo

Edberg eyes Sampras' spot

HONG KONG, Oct 21: Former champion Stefan Edberg has warned that Pete Sampras could soon lose his world number one title after a bad run of injuries, reports AFP.

With Sampras coming back from injury after playing just one tournament in the last four months, Sweden's Edberg predicted Sampras could lose his mantle as the world's best

1,500 point lead over Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia, with Germany's Michael Stich another 300 points adrift in third.

Edberg ranked fifth in the world, former number one Edberg warned that Sampras must perform well over the next month to give himself a cushion for next year.

"It is very possible that Pete will be caught after what has happened," Edberg said.

"Up to Wimbledon he won a tremendous amount of points, but since then he has only played one tournament in three or four months.

"It all depends on what happens over the next couple of months. If he has a bad fall (autumn) he is going to face a lot of pressure next year."

"If one of the top guys has a good fall and wins a couple of big ones, it is possible to catch him."

Sampras began his comeback from injury this week in the Marlboro Championships exhibition tournament here and is now looking for solid performances at tournaments in Stockholm and Paris before the IBM/AFP Tour World Championship in Frankfurt from November 13.

Admitting that he is now struggling after not reaching the final of a Grand Slam event for the first time since 1986, 28-year-old Edberg believes he must reconstruct his once flawless serve if he is to continue threatening the top players. "My biggest problem is consistency on my first serve," he said.

"When I was 19, 20 or 21 I could wake up in the middle of the night and go out and serve

PETE SAMPRAS

player early in the new year. Sampras' main enemy, Edberg said, would be the ATP Tour's ranking computer.

The 23-year-old American built a seemingly unassailable lead by winning eight tournaments this year culminating in his successful Wimbledon defence in July and must now defend the points he earned with those wins.

Anything less than a successful defence of those eight titles will see points deducted from his total according to where he finishes in each event.

Sampras currently holds a

1,500 point lead over Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia, with Germany's Michael Stich another 300 points adrift in third.

Edberg completed a relatively simple 6-4, 6-1 win over Dutch doubles specialist Jacco Eltingh to top his round robin group and qualify for the semifinals.

Eltingh and compatriot Paul Haarhuis are the world's number one doubles pairing, with Haarhuis beating Zimbabwe's

Wayne Black 6-4, 6-1.

Haarhuis will now play Sampras today for another semifinal berth.

Black combined with his more famous brother, Byron, to topple a jovial Sampras and Todd Martin 5-7, 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 in the doubles.

Martin earlier received an easy passage through to the semifinals when Sweden's Magnus Larsson withdrew from his round robin group with a torn shoulder ligament.

In the final group, world number four Sergi Bruguera will meet Dutchman Richard Krajicek today.

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