

Impressive Ivanisevic

WIMBLEDON, June 26: Two-time finalist Goran Ivanisevic served 21 aces as he overpowered Sebastian Lareau of Canada in straight sets Monday in the opening round at Wimbledon, reports AP.

The fourth-seeded Croatian, runner-up in 1992 and 1994, needed just 85 minutes to wear down Lareau 6-2, 6-4, 6-4, in the first match on Court One.

Ivanisevic lost in last year's final to Pete Sampras, who was opening his bid for a third straight title on Centre Court against Germany's Karsten Braasch.

Fully recovered from his first-round loss at the French Open, Sampras is aiming to become the first man since Bjorn Borg — and the very first American — to win Wimbledon three years in a row.

He is seeded second behind top-ranked Andre Agassi, but virtually everyone picks Sampras as the man to beat again. The British bookies make him 10-11 odds-on favourite, with Agassi at 9-2.

"I love the grass-court surface," Sampras said. "It has been really good to me. I just tell myself this is new stuff, and there's a lot of tennis yet to be played. Thank God there is no more clay-court tennis for the rest of the year."

After going home and not touching a racket for several days, Sampras came to London and re-established his grass-court dominance by winning both the singles and doubles titles at the pre-Wimbledon Queen's Club tournament.

"Seems like a pretty good

"I got a whole new start at the Queen's Club," said Sampras, who has won 14 straight matches — and 23 out of 24 — on grass. "I really needed it because I was a little bit down on myself about the clay-court season. I feel good. I feel ready. I am healthy. I am ready to go."

Sampras is ready to emulate Borg, who won five straight Wimbledon titles from 1976-1980. Only five other men in history have won three straight: William Renshaw, Reggie Doherty, H. Laurie Doherty, Anthony Wilding and Fred Perry.

"Winning three would be sweet," Sampras said. "But it is something I am not really thinking about. I just kind of let my racket do the talking. There is pressure, but it is not like I can't sleep at night."



IVANISEVIC

Someone who probably experienced trouble sleeping was Braasch.

A left-hander ranked 119th in the world, Braasch is best known for his goggles, herky-jerky service motion and bad luck in draws — was Agassi's first-round victim at the French Open.

"Seems like a pretty good

opening round match," Sampras said. "He is a pretty crafty player. I think he is probably more comfortable on the slower court, but I am sure he is going to be ready to play and looking forward to play."

In early results Monday, American grass-court specialist Bryan Shelton of the United States ousted 12th-seeded Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands in straight sets, 7-6 (7-2), 6-3, 6-3. It marked the second year in a row that Krajicek lost in the first round, while Shelton showed the form that took him to the Round of 16 last year.

Aaron Krickstein came from two sets down to beat Sweden's Christian Bergstrom, 4-6, 0-6, 7-6 (7-4), 6-2.

In women's play, 12th-seeded Amy Frazier downed Stephanie Rottier, 6-4, 7-5, and No 15 Brenda Shultz-McCarthy was two points away from elimination before rebounding to defeat Radka Bobkova, 6-7 (4-7), 7-6 (7-3), 6-1.

Later, No 6 Kimiko Date was paired against Sabine Apelmanns and No. 8 Gabriela Sabatini was up against Lea Ghirardi of France.

Sampras can be overwhelming on grass with his attacking serve-and-volley game, excellent serve return and shotmaking ability from the baseline.

He beat Jim Courier and Ivanisevic in the last two Wimbledon finals. Both were slam-bang affairs dominated by big serves, leading to widespread criticism in the British media that Sampras and grass-court tennis were boring.



Marc Rosset of Switzerland raises the champions trophy after beating defending champion Germany's Michael Stich in the final of the Halle international tournament in Germany on June 25.

— AFP/UNB photo

Lalas to play in MLS

PISCATAWAY, New Jersey, June 26: US defender Alexi Lalas, who plays for Padova in the First Division of the Italian League, will join Major League Soccer (MLS) when it begins operations next year, the new US league announced on Sunday, reports Reuter.

"The fans here deserve professional soccer," said Lalas, who signed a multi-year pact with the league at undisclosed terms. "This is a great day for me."

Lalas, whose US team has not yet been determined, will remain with Padova for the 1995-96 season.

The red-haired, goateed fan favourite joins two other top international players who have committed to the new league — US midfielder Tab Ramos and flamboyant Mexi-

can goalkeeper Jorge Campos.

Former US World Cup players Desmond Armstrong, Peter Vermes, Mike Lapper and Mike Burns have also signed to play with the start-up league.

Another US player, John Harkes, has said that he would consider joining the MLS. Harkes currently plays for Derby in the English League.

The 10-team, two conference league is scheduled to play its first game on March 31, 1996. Teams will each play a 32-game schedule, and four teams will advance to the play-offs.

"Alexi Lalas is a true all-American superstar," said league chairman Alan Rothenberg. "Major League Soccer is absolutely thrilled to have Alexi on board. His signing further proves that MLS is committed to signing the top national and international players."

Lalas, who has made 53 appearances and scored five goals for the US national team, was the first American to play in the Italian League.

"My experience in Italy has given me even greater appreciation for the beauty and passion that is soccer," said Lalas. "I know I am a better soccer player now and I am committed to bringing that experience back home to MLS."

In contrast, goalkeeper Friedel twice thwarted Colombian chances. Midway through the half he was lucky to kick out a Fredy Rincon shot that had deflected off Lalas and on the stroke of halftime he dived to his left to parry a Nuber Arboleda header.

Eighteen viewers complained to the ITC about the Nike advertisement saying it was an attempt to glorify and exploit Cantona's infamy and labelled it "insensitive and inappropriate."

But the ITC dismissed the complaints, saying the commercial was backing a "kick racism out of football" campaign and had received positive reactions from the soccer authorities and supporters.

The Video Standards Council is also looking at posters for a soccer video game which have also come under fire for allegedly glorifying Cantona's kung fu assault.

The Video Standards Council said it would examine the advertisements and may ask the Advertising Standards Authority to investigate.

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