

Seles set for Saturday

ATLANTIC CITY, USA, July 25: Monica Seles makes her return to tennis here Saturday, setting aside past horrors and heretics to begin taking back control of her life, reports AFP.

Seles will play Martina Navratilova in an exhibition match, her first competition since being stabbed in the back on April 30, 1993. Seles has overcome the physical and emotional trauma of going from champion to victim in what might be her greatest triumph.

"I will be nervous and excited," Seles said. "It will be something I haven't seen in 2-1/2 years. With a huge crowd, you're very nervous. I will just try to go back to the normality and everything that was working before I left."

She might as well try to capture lightning in a bottle. At age 19, Seles was the queen of tennis. She had it all — two years as undisputed world number one, eight Grand Slam titles among 32 WTA single crowns and 7.4 million dollars in winnings in slightly more than four years.

Only a loss to Steffi Graf in the 1992 Wimbledon final kept Seles from a Grand Slam sweep during a run of seven victories in nine events. She won the French Open from 1990-1992, the US Open in 1991 and 1992 and the Australian Open from 1991-1993.

"I hope I'll have another chance at Wimbledon," Seles said.

"I rise above my game at Grand Slam events. Every Grand Slam for me is an extra special thing. I can't say how much they have meant for me."

The 1993 Australian title became the most meaningful for Seles, who feared more than once through her long recovery it might be her final

Slam triumph. "Winning the Australian Open in '93 was the biggest. I finally felt like number one," Seles said. "I felt bad I didn't get to play all those Grand Slams. I was stopped at the peak."

Seles uses phrases like "left the game" or "stopped playing" when "almost killed" would be closer to the truth. Seles was seriously wounded 27 months ago during a change-over against Magdalena Maleeva in a quarter-final match at the



MONICA SELES

Hamburg Open.

Guenter Parche, a 38-year-old unemployed lathe operator who wanted Germany's Steffi Graf to be world number one, leaped out of the crowd from behind Seles and plunged a knife into her back just below the left shoulder blade.

"My scream is what stayed with me a long time," Seles said.

Nightmares remained after the pain had subsided. For two years, Seles became a tennis recluse, losing perhaps the most magnificent years of her career. The youngest girl to become the world's best player has grown

into a woman. The opportunity to watch her transformation is what Guenter Parche took from the world.

"I think I'm still the same person," Seles said. "I've grown up a little bit, matured some. I'm two years older."

"I'm the same pretty much everywhere, just a little taller."

Yugoslavian-born Seles became a US citizen on March 16, 1994. She and her parents, father Karolj and mother Esther, moved to Sarasota, Florida.

"She's not a little girl anymore. She's a woman," said Navratilova, who worked out with Seles in May.

"Her skills haven't deteriorated. When I played with Monica, I was doing most of the running. When she gets her confidence back, she is going to be tough to beat."

"I'm playing against the number one player in the world as far as I'm concerned."

Seles was 17 years, three months and nine days old when she first held that honour. She will be restored to the rankings as a co-number one with Graf when she returns to the WTA tour next month under a special plan Navratilova pushed.

"Monica was the victim of an unprecedented crime in sports," Navratilova said. "She deserves to return with a number one ranking."

Seles begins her comeback on a rubberised carpet surface installed here Monday at the Convention Center, chosen for this event because Navratilova had matches nearby on Friday and Sunday. For Seles, it could have been anywhere.

ROK-Japan World Cup economics

SEOUL, July 25: South Korea said Tuesday it will spend 1.3 billion dollars to build and improve soccer facilities to boost its chances of hosting the 2002 World Cup, reports AP.

South Korea is competing with Japan to become the first Asian country to host international soccer's showpiece event. Japan boasts better facilities, but South Korea has better World Cup records, qualifying four times for the tournament to none for Japan.

The money will be used to build 11 new stadiums, including a 264 million dollar facility with 65,000 seats in Pusan, South Korea's second-largest city, and renovating existing stadiums. Seoul's bid committee said in a news release.

South Korea has steadily revised upward its proposed spending plan, from 120 million dollars to 750 million dollars and now to 1.3 billion dollars.

The South Korean budget compares with the 5.2 billion dollars Japan plans to spend on stadiums. Seoul officials noted the strong yen and high land and materials prices that make construction in Japan more costly.

Also on Tuesday, Prime Minister Lee Hong-Koo instructed thorough preparations in transport, lodging and other facilities before the nation submits a formal host proposal in September.

FIFA is to select the host city by next June.

Kumble humbles Hampshire

LONDON, July 25: Leg spinner Anil Kumble claimed six wickets as English county championship contenders Northamptonshire came close to pulling off an unlikely victory over Hampshire at Northampton on Monday, reports Reuter.

Northants, forced to follow on 239 runs adrift on Saturday, had set Hampshire a target of 127 off 22 overs — a target which appeared well within their reach when they reached 76 for one with seven overs remaining.

But Hampshire then lost five wickets in the space of 27 deliveries, two more went down in the final over, and the match ended with them nine runs short of victory on 118 for eight. Kumble captured six for 61 for a match haul of 13 for 192.

Gunnell granted extra time

LONDON, July 25: Sally Gunnell received a vote of confidence from Britain's World Championship selectors here on Monday, reports AFP.

Gunnell was granted extra time to prove she is fit enough to represent Britain in the 4x400m relay in Gothenburg abandoning her comeback in Sheffield on Sunday.

Simpson's bust stolen

CLEVELAND, Ohio, July 25: A bronze bust of O J Simpson stolen from the pro football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, will be returned today, officials said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The life-sized bust was stolen on Sunday, apparently by a Hall of Fame visitor, and was recovered Monday morning by two highway maintenance workers at the bottom of a highway embankment.

Bubka at the helm

MONTE CARLO, July 25: Sergei Bubka, aiming for his fifth successive pole vault world title, will lead the Ukrainian squad at August's athletics World Championships in Gothenburg, the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) said on Monday, reports Reuter.

WIMBLEDON NOTEBOOK

Whither marriage!

Tawfiq Aziz Khan back from Wimbledon

ANDRE Agassi was perhaps the most popular player at Wimbledon this year. A measure of it could be had from the number of spectators he drew at the Centre Court where he played five of his matches out of six and the support he received from them. Agassi did not conform to the popular ideas of a gentleman tennis player rather he was the symbol of a rebel, a livewire in an otherwise sombre spectacle. His head was clean-shaven of the tuft of long hair at the back, ear-rings dangling from his ears and his sartorial choice was bizarre. The baggy short, loose shirt and the white bandana with the sign of Nike, the sportswear company he endorsed, gave a distinct impression that he was not with the crowd. This whiz kid of tennis turned professional at the age of only 16 in 1986. Tennis buffs around the world had tremendous confidence in the ability of Agassi and expectation for his exploits in the professional circuit. But various factors including psychological and physical, denied him of his due prominence in the world of tennis. In fact from a world ranking of No. 91 in 1986 he had overcome tremendous odds to become No. 1 in 1995 after he had won the Australian Open in January. He won Wimbledon title in 1992 which was his first worthwhile achievement only to drift away to No. 24 in the World in 1993. But he came back very strong and won the US Open in 1994 and Australian Open in 1995 taking the top position dethroning Pete Sampras from the World Number One position. In his nine years as a pro these three Grand Slam titles are his major achievements.

halted by no less a player than Boris Becker who himself created history in 1985 by becoming the youngest ever Men's Singles champion at Wimbledon at the age of only 17 years defeating Kevin Curren of the United States

box along with Agassi's coach and other friends, many of the spectators started taking photographs. But none from the press Box was supposed to take any picture. I am sorry I took liberty of using my camera and managed to



Brooke Shields (hat on) at the players' guest box at Centre Court.

in the final. But Agassi has his own charisma. Inside the court he has enormous crowd support. Outside his fans keep vigil for him in makeshift tents along the pavement at Church Road. These fans come from as far as New Zealand and South Africa. But a section of the British Press was quite cruel when they called him 'bald, fat, short and ugly' which Agassi protested in a post match Press conference. Whatever he is, it can't be denied that he has one of the most beautiful women in the world. Brooke Shields follows him on his tours and she was at the Wimbledon too. The players' guests box is just beside the Press Box at the Centre Court and Agassi's friend was there to cheer him up. As soon as Miss Shields took her seat in the

take a few shots. It was interesting that Agassi would not look up to the box whenever he served an ace or won a point but he would always make excuses whenever he would commit an error by looking up at his friend and shouting something.

Agassi's romance with Brooke Shields is no secret. But no one knows when they are going to be married.

Brooke Shields would like to get married at the age of 30. And she is now 30 five years older than Agassi. But her boyfriend is a believer in love not in marriage. At least that is what he told a press conference after his match against Patrick McEnroe. Perhaps he would have changed his mind had he won the title at Wimbledon this year.

Who knows?

Ma and Wang axed

BELJING, July 26: World record-holder Wang Junxia and her estranged coach Ma Junren have been dropped from the Chinese squad for the world athletics championships in Sweden in August, the Chinese Athletics Association said today, reports Reuter.

Wang, the 10,000 metres world record-holder who broke with her tough coach amid acrimonious squabbles last year, performed poorly at the national trials in Taiyuan, northern Shanxi province, in May.

China will take part in 17 events at the Gothenburg World Championships, with most athletes competing for the first time.

Their main medal hopes are in the women's shot put and the men's and women's walking events.

China finished second behind the United States in the medal standings at the last World Championships in Stuttgart in 1993 with four golds, two silvers and two bronzes.

ATP top 20

MONACO, July 25 (Reuter): Leading men's rankings issued by the ATP Tour on Monday:

1. Andre Agassi (US)	5,176 points
2. Pete Sampras (US)	3,834
3. Thomas Muster (Austria)	3,667
4. Boris Becker (Germany)	3,598
5. Michael Chang (US)	3,025
6. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia)	2,676
7. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia)	2,621
8. Wayne Ferreira (South Africa)	2,377
9. Michael Stich (Germany)	2,166
10. Sergi Bruguera (Spain)	2,155
11. Marc Rosset (Switzerland)	2,069
12. Magnus Larsson (Sweden)	1,840
13. Jim Courier (US)	1,708
14. Richard Krajicek (Netherlands)	1,673
15. Stefan Edberg (Sweden)	1,565
16. Alberto Berasategui (Spain)	1,519
17. Andrei Medvedev (Ukraine)	1,487
18. Todd Martin (US)	1,465
19. Thomas Enqvist (Sweden)	1,433
20. Jacco Eltingh (Netherlands)	1,291

ATP leading money-winners

MONACO, July 25 (Reuter): Leading prize money-winners issued by the ATP Tour on Monday:

1. Thomas Muster (Austria)	1,727,229 dollars
2. Pete Sampras (US)	1,382,116
3. Andre Agassi (US)	1,334,241
4. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia)	954,046
5. Boris Becker (Germany)	858,099
6. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia)	786,732
7. Michael Chang (US)	719,300
8. Wayne Ferreira (South Africa)	668,596
9. Magnus Larsson (Sweden)	652,560
10. Paul Haarhuis (Netherlands)	652,142
11. Richard Krajicek (Netherlands)	646,552
12. Jacco Eltingh (Netherlands)	600,071
13. Sergi Bruguera (Spain)	560,969
14. Michael Stich (Germany)	547,617
15. Andrei Medvedev (Ukraine)	533,912
16. Jonas Bjorkman (Sweden)	516,062
17. Stefan Edberg (Sweden)	512,849
18. Todd Woodbridge (Australia)	452,331
19. Mark Woodforde (Australia)	445,421
20. Jim Courier (US)	425,322

Asian women's b'ball results

SHIZUOKA, Japan, July 25: South Korea came back from behind to beat three-time defending champions China 78-73 for their second straight win today to remain unbeaten in the Asian women's basketball championships, reports AFP.

The Koreans, who shocked China on their way to winning the Asian Games in Hiroshima last year, trailed the World Championships silver medalists 42-47 at half time.

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Courier overcomes Nestor

MONTREAL, July 25: American Jim Courier outlasted a fatigued Daniel Nestor of Canada

7-6 (7-1), 6-4 in the first round of the 1.795 million dollars Canadian Open on Monday, reports Reuter.

The 13th-ranked Courier didn't have an easy time by-passing the 150th-ranked Nestor, even though the Canadian, who has played non-stop for the past seven weeks, was not in peak condition.

Although it didn't appear to be that hot, Nestor said he felt the conditions were oppressive and that he started to cramp in the eighth game of the second set.

"I felt the heat a lot and almost had to stop," said Nestor, ranked 150th. "I didn't want to stop because it wouldn't have looked too good.... I started cramping at 4-4 (in the second set) but I just kept going for it."

After swapping service breaks in the first set, Courier dominated the tie breaker courtesy of effective passing shots and Nestor sunfired errors.

Courier led 4-2 in the second set, but Nestor broke even in the eighth game. Nestor, however, lost his serve in the 18-point ninth

game, in which he served three double faults. "I hope to get in as many matches as I can this week," Courier said. "I just expect to compete hard all summer and see how my results go."

Thomas Enqvist of Sweden, seeded 12th, defeated Adrian Panaitescu of Romania 6-0, 6-2 in another first-round match.

But 14th-seeded David Wheaton was toppled by Brett Steven of New Zealand 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Steven, who had a 70 per cent first serve percentage,



JIM COURIER

felt his serve helped him through the crucial third set. "I start serving first in the third set and was holding serve comfortably," Steven said. "Having the past two weeks off for holiday I was not in the best form I could be, but I got the vital breaks."

The top eight seeds, headed by Andre Agassi, Pete Sampras, Michael Chang and Yevgeny Kafelnikov, all received first round byes and will not play until Wednesday.

Only two of the world's top ten players — third-ranked Thomas Muster and fourth-ranked Boris Becker — have chosen to skip the Canadian Open. Becker withdrew from the tournament with a calf injury.

Dutchman Richard Krajicek, the 14th-ranked player in the world, successfully played the qualifying even here after failing to secure a wildcard, which ultimately went to seventh-ranked Goran Ivanisevic and four Canadian players. Krajicek didn't plan on playing here. But after losing in the first round of Wimbledon, he was eager for the competition and didn't resent having to qualify.

"Who needed the Number 14 player in the world when most of the top 10 players are here," said Krajicek, explaining why he didn't receive a wildcard.

Florian's final hurdle

LONDON, July 25: Florian Schwarthoff, one of the high hurdles favourites at next week's World Championships, can thank a basketball injury late last year for the best season of his life, reports Reuter.

Warming up for an indoor training session with a light-hearted basketball match, Schwarthoff twisted an ankle when he landed on a colleague's foot after sinking a basket.

The 27-year-old German was obliged to give up the short but intensive winter

season with the result, he believes, that the world is now seeing him at his best.

"I'm sure my form is due to missing the winter season," Schwarthoff said. "Next year I absolutely won't compete indoors."

"I hope to do well in Gothenburg but I'm concentrating only on myself, not on my rivals. If I am in good shape and mentally strong then I can do something really special."

With 1993 champion Colin Jackson pulling out of the championships through injury, Schwarthoff has good reason to be confident about

Gothenburg. The European silver medalist has defeated Jackson three times this season and has clocked the second fastest time of the year.

Schwarthoff's chief advantage is his height of 2.01 metres, which means he need hardly bend to clear the 10 flights.

"Between the hurdles, though, my height is a disadvantage," Schwarthoff said. "I can only do frequent short steps."

The "frequent short steps" are getting faster. At the Nice Grand Prix he outpaced Jackson between the barriers despite being down at the halfway mark. He also won the European Cup in Lille in June as, for the second year running, his country proved itself the continent's strongest team.

"I think our strength lies in our selection policy," Schwarthoff said. "We now have US style sudden-death trials. So you have a lot of pressure on yourself and that's why we're so strong. We have to be strong."

When not at the track Schwarthoff is a student of architecture, a profession he decided to pursue following a school visit to Dresden in 1987.

It was the first time that the 19-year-old had crossed into the former East Germany and it left a lasting impression.



Agassi fans keeping a vigil outside Wimbledon.

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D-755 **Secretary**