

Goran dates with destiny

Goran Ivanisevic's run of bad luck at the Grand Slam circuit has continued as the tall Croat sprained his ankle in the third set after winning the first two at the US Open tennis championships on Monday, report agencies.

The sixth-seeded hard-hitting player, who was upset in the second round two years ago and the first last year, was three games from a straight-set win in the closing night match on Stadium Court when disaster struck.

At 3-3 in the third set, Ivanisevic was chasing a ball across the baseline when he badly twisted his left ankle and fell to the ground writhing in pain.

After a few minutes of apparent agony, the trainer helped him off the court and taped the ankle.

The Croatian ace master gamely tried to play on, but after dropping the set 6-3 and falling behind 3-1 in the fourth, he retired, leaving New Zealander Brett Steven a surprise 4-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-1 winner.

Meanwhile, the grunt and the giggle are back as a nervous Monica Seles returned to the Grand Slam stage with a 6-3, 6-1 victory over first-round victim Ruxandra Dragomir of Romania.

With the possible exception of an Andre Agassi-Pete Sampras men's final, Seles' opener was the most eagerly anticipated match of the 1995 US Open.

The Louis Armstrong Stadium was unusually crowded for an early-round night match and a huge number of photographers awaited her entrance on the Centre Court.

Then she opened her first Grand Slam match since the 1993 Australian Open final, her first game at a major since being stabbed in the back in Hamburg 28 months ago — with a double fault.

The whole match I was very nervous, I kept saying, relax Monica, you're so tight," said the 21-year-old superstar, who giggled for way through her post-match interview after looking very nervous on court. "My god, I was just so stiff."

"She tried to slow me down so much and my adrenalin was going so fast, I had too much energy in me," Seles said.

The last time Seles played on this court, in September of 1992, she won her second successive US Open title.

It was a long, hard road back for Seles, whose physical injuries healed long before the emotional scars of her Hamburg trauma.

"I was just so happy to be playing. For a long time I dreamed of this."

"After hitting for five, ten minutes all the memories came back, everything started coming back, where my father and mom sat, where I held the trophy," she reminisced.

Seles a naturalised American, followed her dou-

ble fault by taking the next four points, winning her first game and receiving warm applause from the welcoming crowd.

Her play was erratic — she would follow a couple of overpowering strokes down the line by pushing a shot wide or showing some slug-

be more back to that real competitiveness, trying to get back to (where I was) before all this happened."

"It is good to see her back," declared ninth-seeded 1990 Open champion Gabriela Sabatini, who earlier crushed Italian Adriana Serra-Zanetti 6-1, 6-1 in just

champions also flexed their Grand Slam muscles on the opening day.

Fourth seed Boris Becker, this year's Wimbledon runner-up and the 1989 Open champion, overwhelmed Spaniard Alex Lopez Moron 6-1, 6-0, 6-3.

"I didn't really break much of a sweat," admitted Becker.

"I played an hour and 20 minutes, which is very, very short for a best-of-five hard-court match."

Stefan Edberg, unseeded here for the first time since 1984, opened the tournament on Stadium Court with a 6-0, 6-3, 7-6 victory over Czech Martin Damm.

Edberg, the 1991 and 1992 champion whose ranking has slipped to 19th in the world, moved past John McEnroe into third place on the Open-era Grand Slam Victory list with his 168th career win in a major tournament.

The men lost their first seeded player early on Monday when 10th-seeded South African Wayne Ferreira was ambushed by Jerome Golmard of France, who became only the 10th qualifier to pick off a men's seed in US Open history.

Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev, seeded 16th, advanced with a four-set victory and the Open's marathon man, Aaron Krickstein, rode one of his patented five-set wins into the second round.

The 45th-ranked Krickstein outlasted Lionel Roux of France 3-6, 6-3, 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 to raise his US Open record in five-set matches to 9-2 and his career record in five-setters to 28-7.

The most dramatic moment of the day came when Japan's Shuzo Matsuoka defaulted to Petr Korda in the fourth set after winning the second-set and third-set tiebreakers.

Matsuoka, who played an inspired Wimbledon before losing to Pete Sampras in the quarters, clutched his left leg and collapsed as if he'd been shot as cramps bulged his thighs after he won the first point while serving at 5-6 in the fourth set.

The fans, most of them unaware of the rules, booed the umpire for what seemed like callousness in letting Matsuoka lie there for so long without help. The umpire never even left his chair to see whether Matsuoka actually was having cramps or something far more serious.

The big guns are set to start firing today with top seed and defending champion Agassi and second-seeded Wimbledon winner Sampras set for afternoon matches on the Stadium Court.

The Americans also led 51 to 48 in total medals. China won four golds — three in diving and one in swimming — boosting its total to nine and moving it ahead of the eight of South Korea and the seven of Russia.

Track and field competition began, and Hungary and Romania won the first two events. Hungary also won gold in women's fencing.

Germany won a diving gold, and Brazil added one in swimming as Fernando Scherer reinforced his position as the games' fastest sprint swimmer.

Davis came out of the Games with four gold medals — one in the men's 400-metre freestyle and three in relays including the final 4x100-metre medley, in which the Americans broke a games record.

Japan led after three legs, but Davis, anchored the US quartet to a winning time of 3 minutes, 42.02 seconds, erasing the old mark of 3:42.99 set by another American quartet in 1985. Japan was second in 3:43.36.

The day's four other races all were decided by less than 2 seconds.

Japan's Hisato Yasui won the day's longest race, the men's 1,500-metre freestyle, by .06 second over Brazil's Luiz Eduardo Lima, who almost, made up a 1.68-second deficit over the last 100 metres. France's Yann Defabrique, the men's 200-metre freestyle winner, placed third.

Scherer won one of the shortest, the men's 50 freestyle, by .18 second over American Bill Pilczuk after winning the 100 earlier in the games.

In the women's 50, China's Sun Jialin won by .02 second over American Nicole de Man.

American Kristin Heydaneck was just .08 ahead in winning the women's 100-metre backstroke over Japan's Yoko Koikawa, the 200-metre gold medalist.

With Tuesday's victories, the Americans came out with 16 gold medals in the games 24 swimming events. Japan finished with seven.

Manchester United's Steve Bruce desperately tries to stop Blackburn Rovers' Chris Sutton during their English Premiership clash in Blackburn on August 28. United won 2-1.

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Danes rely on Laudrup

COPENHAGEN, Aug 29: Michael Laudrup and his injured brother Brian were named on Monday in Denmark's 16-man squad for a do-or-die European Championship qualifier against Belgium in Brussels on September 6, reports Reuter.

There were few changes from the squad who beat Armenia 2-0 in Yerevan on August 16 and elevated Denmark to second place in Group Two, five points behind Spain but three ahead of third-placed Belgium. Two teams qualify from the group.

Coach Richard Moeller Nielsen replaced Mogens Krogh with Lars Hoegh as second string goalkeeper and dropped defender Torben Piechnik and midfielder John Jensen without replacing them, trimming the squad to 16 players from 18.

Moeller Nielsen said he might name a 17th player later.

Glasgow Rangers striker Brian Laudrup was in the squad for the Armenia game but was unable to play after sustaining an ankle injury during a training session. He remains doubtful to face Belgium.

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Hristo, Weah debut well

ROME, Aug 29: Bulgaria's Hristo Stoichkov and Liberian George Weah both scored on their Serie A debuts for Parma and AC Milan respectively as Italy's First Division championships kicked off on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Stoichkov, signed from Barcelona in the close season, struck with a superb 76th minute free-kick in his side's disappointing 1-1 draw at Atalanta, for whom Christian Vieri scored a last minute equaliser.

Ex-Paris St Germain striker Weah took just six minutes to set Milan on their way to a 2-1 win at Padova although last season's beaten European Cup finalists needed a rare goal from veteran sweeper Franco Baresi to claim all three points.

The 35-year-old regained the initiative for Milan in the 44th minute after Nicola Amoroso had levelled the score against the run of play.

Midfielder Christian Karembeu, who moved from French Champions Nantes to Sampdoria, was also on target in his first appearance for his new club, athletically heading a 22nd minute opener in the night match with Roma.

But the visitors, outsiders in this year's title race, equalised within two minutes through former Sampdoria man Marco Branca before playing out a 1-1 draw.

As Parma and Milan

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struggled to impress, champions Juventus made an ominously impressive start with a 4-1 thrashing of Cremonese.

Fabrizio Ravanelli, whose goals helped give the Turin side their first title in nine years last season, settled a one-sided affair with two goals in the space of five minutes midway through the second half.

Earlier Vladimir Jugovic, signed from Sampdoria in the summer, fired Juventus in front with a 17th minute solo effort only for Riccardo Maspiero to equalise with a 47th minute free-kick — Cremonese's only shot on target in the match.

Frenchman Didier Deschamps scored Juve's fourth to complete the rout.

At Rome's Olympic Stadium, last year's championship runners-up Lazio also opened the season with a 4-1 victory over promoted Piacenza.

England midfielder Paul Ince's debut for Internazionale against Vicenza was overshadowed by Brazilian Roberto Carlo's spectacular 53rd minute winner, a 25-metre free-kick.

Bari striker Igor Protti helped himself to 1,000 bottles of quality wine as reward for scoring the season's maiden goal, a third minute effort in his side's 1-1 draw with Napoli.

Milan grabbed the close season headlines when they signed Weah and Juventus playmaker Roberto Baggio to

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solve the goal-scoring problems that plagued their soccer last season.

Against Padova, the pair soon set about paying back Milan's faith in their talents, combining in the sixth minute to put their side in front.

Baggio swung a free-kick deep into the heart of the penalty area where Weah outjumped American defender Alexi Lalas before surprising goalkeeper Adriano Bonauti with a powerful back-header.

The visitors kept a firm grip on the match until the 34th minute when Amoroso surprised Sebastiano Rossi with a first-time shot that curled away from his despairing dive into the far corner.

Despite an inspired Weah, it took Baresi's surprise effort to settle the encounter.

Serie A's longest serving player took his chance with all the prowess of a natural finisher, playing a one-two with Weah and chesting the ball down before side-footing past Bonauti.

The fiery Stoichkov was brought to Parma to instill his new side with the killer instinct so often missing last season.

But, apart from the Bulgarian's superb second half goal, when he curled a trademark free-kick over the Atalanta defensive wall into the net, the UEFA Cup holders still displayed all their old failings, including a failure two close out matches.

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Soccer fan dead

SAO PAULO, Aug 29: A youth injured in a riot following a soccer game nine days ago died of his injuries on Monday, TV Globo reported, reports Reuter.

Marcio Gasparini Silva, 16, was beaten in a soccer riot that broke out following the Palmeiras-Sao Paulo game at Sao Paulo's Pacaembu Stadium on August 20.

A wooden pole was broken on Silva's head, and as the stunned fan moved away from rioters, he hit his head on a metal pole in the stadium.

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America atop the table

FUKUOKA, Aug 29: Josh Davis came from behind in the last leg of the final relay Tuesday as the American swimmers put their nation ahead of Japan in the World University Games gold medal race, reports AP.

Japan, which had led in medals for the first five days of the games, picked up one gold each in swimming and tennis. The Americans had two in swimming and one in tennis, putting them ahead 18 to 17 overall.

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Capitalising on Varsity Games!

FUKUOKA, Japan, Aug 29: For some athletes, competing at the World University Games is preparation for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta in more ways than one, reports AP.

Aside from the pressure of international competition, the heat and humidity conditions are similar in Fukuoka and Atlanta.

"Some athletes who train in the southeastern part of (the United States) have said it feels like home to them," said Frank Zang, press officer with the US delegation.

For Australians, coming to Fukuoka means coming to summer from the southern hemisphere winter.

"Australians are always competing outside of their natural climate zone," said Tritia Evans, the Australian delegation press officer. "Any experience, especially around this time of year, is valuable."

With some 4,000 athletes from more than 150 nations and territories competing, these are the biggest University Games ever.

No respite for Rovers

LONDON, Aug 29: A goal by midfielder David Beckham gave Manchester United some measure of revenge over the side who supplanted them when they sent Premier League champions Blackburn plunging to their third defeat in six days on Monday, reports Reuter.

Beckham, the 20-year-old thrown in at the deep end by manager Alex Ferguson as the replacement for the departed Andrei Kanchelskis, netted his second goal of the season.

After a scoreless first-half Lee Sharpe was on hand to poke the ball home and give