

All's well that ends well



NEW YORK, Sept 9 (Reuters): When Pete Sampras won his first Grand Slam title at 19, it came so easily to him that he didn't appreciate it. Seven major titles later he knows better.

"Over the course of the years I know what it takes to win majors," he said Sunday after claiming his fourth US Open crown with a straight sets win over Michael Chang.

"You need to play great tennis, you need to have a little bit of luck on your side. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication."

Those lessons were drummed into him by his late coach, Tim Gullikson, who died this spring from brain cancer.

It was under Gullikson's tutelage that Sampras became the number one player in the world and a three-time Wimbledon winner.

And so it seemed as if the tennis gods had conspired to make Sampras a Grand Slam champion again with the US Open final on the day that would have been Gullikson's 45th birthday.

"I've never been a big believer in fate or destiny," said Sampras. "I just feel like you just got to go out and play and win."

That was another lesson from Gullikson, whose death hit the young champion so ter-

ribly hard and who is never far from Sampras's thoughts.

So it was even more poignant that when Sampras hoisted his trophy, he saw the image of his beloved coach in the face of Gullikson's twin brother, Tom.

"I saw Tom when I was holding up the trophy and it was a nice moment," an emotional Sampras said.

"I know Pete in many ways really wanted to win this for Tim and honour him and his memory," Gullikson said.

"He realised it all along that it was his birthday today. He's been thinking about Tim a lot," added Gullikson, who has worked with Sampras as captain of the US Davis Cup team.

"Tim was such an integral part of his early tennis life and his life in general," Tom said of his brother's contribution to Sampras's success.

Gullikson's wish for the world number one is that with this birthday tribute, Sampras will be able to move on.

"Hopefully he'll be able to put everything behind him and play a little bit more for himself. That will be healthier for him," Gullikson said.

A year of tragedy off the court and disappointment on turned around Sunday with a victory over Chang that Sampras called one of the best matches he has ever played.

"This year has been very dif-

ficult at times on and off the court and this really leaves a very happy thought and some very good memories," said Sampras after avoiding a Grand Slam shut-out this season.

"I'm just so happy. I'm pumped, I really am," said Sampras, who measures his success not by his ranking or earnings but by victories in the four Grand Slams.

"This definitely saved my year. It really does. This will definitely make the rest of the '96 season very enjoyable to play," he said.

"My main goal when it's January 1 is to win a major title and this was my last chance to do it and I did," said Sampras, who barely survived a dramatic fifth-set tie-break win over Spaniard Alex Corretja in the quarterfinals.

The sight of Sampras staggering through those final points like a marathon runner whose legs had turned to rubber will long be one of the most enduring images of this US Open.

"I'm only 25. I'm going to have many more majors ahead of me," added Sampras, who is now three Slam titles short of equaling his idol Rod Laver's total of 11.

"When all is said and done, you look at your career and these are the matches that are going to stand out," he said.

"This is sweet."

Chang's parting shot

NEW YORK, Sept 9: Irrepressible Michael Chang delivered a parting message to Pete Sampras after losing to his longtime rival in the US Open final Sunday, reports Reuters.

"I've seen a heck of a lot of Pete in the juniors since we were eight years old and whether he likes it or not, he is going to be seeing a heck of a lot of me until his career is over," said Chang, who first played Sampras 17 years ago on the hard courts of Southern California.

Despite holding the upper hand now, the 25-year-old Sampras knows that Chang will never give up the fight.

"Michael earns his wins and makes his living fighting and fighting and fighting, and this is his character," said world number one Sampras. "That is what makes him a champion and he will be around for the next five, six, seven, 10 years."

Chang's combative nature has carried the 5-foot-9 (1.75 m) battler to the heights of the tennis world since his meteoric rise in 1989 when he became the youngest Grand Slam men's champion by winning the French Open.

Chang has no doubts that he'll be back in another Open final.

"The way I look at it is that today things didn't go my way, but you know I'm just going to keep my head up and continue to work hard and strive for bigger and better things," said Chang, who also lost in this year's Australian Open final.

"You can look at it as disappointing, but you can look at the positive and say, well, this is the first time I have gotten to the US Open final," he added. "If I work hard, hopefully next year I can take it a step further."

"I still feel like my best tennis is ahead of me."

Popov plans comeback

MOSCOW, Sept 9: Russian Olympic swimming champion Alexander Popov said Monday he plans to resume training in Australia as soon as he recovers from being stabbed in the stomach in a fight, reports AP.

"I do not know exactly when I'll go to Australia, I have to get well first, but I'll go back there to train," Popov told the ITAR-Tass news agency.

Popov, who won two gold and two silver Olympic medals this year in Atlanta, trains at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra.

The 25-year-old swimmer was on his way home from a birthday party in Moscow Aug. 24 when they got into an argument with watermelon vendors.

Popov was stabbed with a knife that penetrated his stomach, grazing his lungs. He was immediately rushed to hospital, from which he was discharged on Friday.

"Now I feel well," Popov told ITAR-Tass. But he said he needs some time to get into shape again.

He said he was going to his home city of Volgograd in southern Russia to attend a ceremony in honour of his Olympic triumph, and then on to visit his parents who live in the Urals.

"I am not sure I'll accept the International Olympic Committee's invitation to go to Switzerland for rehabilitation, perhaps my grandmother can fix me up at home with her herbal medicines," Popov was quoted as saying.

Malaysia hold Thailand

SINGAPORE, Sept 9: Reduced to ten men, Malaysia pulled off one of the Asian football shocks of the year holding a rampant Thailand side to a 1-1 draw in the Tiger Cup Sunday night and all but assuring themselves off a place in the semifinals Friday, reports AFP.

In another result from Group B Sunday Brunei edged the Philippines 1-0 to ensure the tiny sultanate avoids the wooden spoon in this group.

Malaysia's valuable one point puts themselves two behind Thailand and Singapore, level on seven points each.

But Malaysia play Brunei in their final match Tuesday, and are virtually assured a win, while Singapore need to beat Thailand to win through to the semis, while a draw for Thailand would be sufficient for the final four.

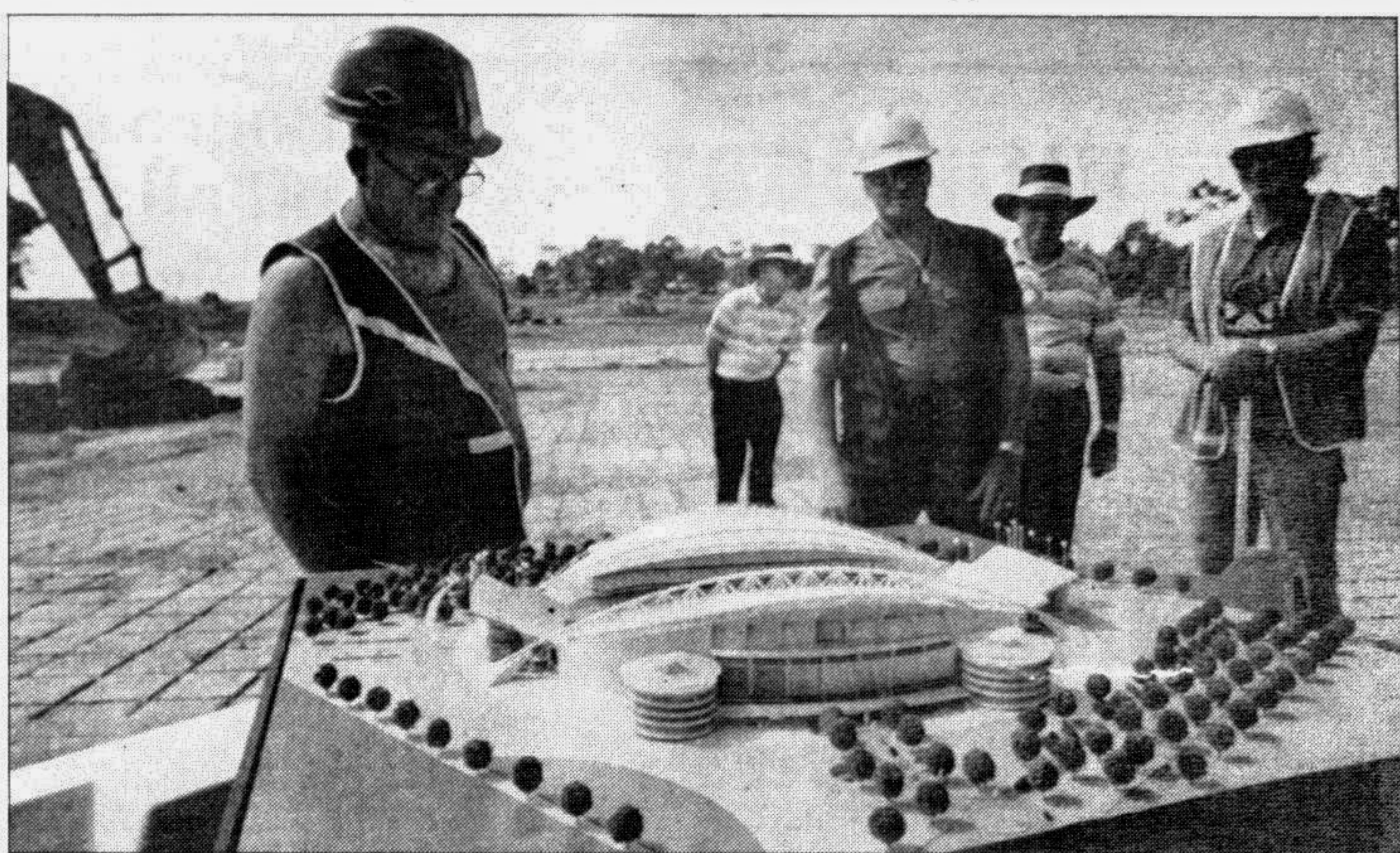
Inevitably it was Thailand that took early control of the game through Kiatsakul Senamuang whose 30-year right foot bolt lifted his side to almost total dominance in the first half.

On the restart though Malaysia reimposed themselves on the game and were rewarded in the 57th minute when veteran Pahang defender Zainal Abidin Hasan's freekick pierced the Thai wall and ran home.

The booking was Zainal's third since the Tiger Cup's start a week ago and a disciplinary panel will meet Monday to decide the length of his suspension.

Christy Martin is held up by her husband Jim after she won her bout against Melinda Robinson in Las Vegas on Sept 7.

— AFP/UNB photo



Workers look at a model of under-construction Sydney Olympic Stadium in Homebush on Sept 9. — AFP/UNB photo

Biggest bowl underway

SYDNEY, Sept 9: Construction of the biggest Olympic Stadium in history began in Sydney on Monday, with officials promising the 110,000 seat arena would be ready at least a year before the 2000 Sydney Games start, reports Reuters.

The New South Wales state government, which has budgeted to spend 1.9 billion dollars (1.5 billion US dollars) on staging the Games, said the A 665 million dollar stadium would be ready by June 1999.

The stadium will cost more than twice as much as the 230 million (US million) Olympic venue in Atlanta for the 1996 Games.

"As it is the biggest Olympic stadium ever, more people will have the opportunity to see Games events," New South Wales state Premier Bob Carr told reporters during a ceremony at the site.

The stadium will set a new standard of excellence for spectators with unrivalled views and comfort," Carr said. The Sydney Olympics start in September 2000.

The Los Angeles Coliseum held the previous record for an Olympic venue with a capacity of 101,000 for the 1984 Games, a spokeswoman for the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games told.

Local taxpayers are contributing A 151 million dollars to the cost of building the stadium at Homebush in Sydney's western suburbs, with a private sector consortium raising the balance in return for operating rights.

The stadium will host the opening and closing cere-

monies, and track and field athletics. Olympic organisers have yet to decide the venue for the soccer final.

As part of the design, the stands can be moved to change the shape of the stadium from an oval to a smaller rectangle for use as a venue for soccer or rugby matches.

The reversible realignment of the stands involves the removal of temporary seating at each end of the stadium, reducing the capacity to 80,000.

Tenders are still being considered by the state government for the Sydney Games' biggest infrastructure project, the athletes' Village. Originally budgeted at A 737 million dollars, it will house 15,000 athletes.

A decision on the village is expected by the end of 1996.

Meanwhile, the New South Wales state government has seized control of the 2000 Olympics as it seeks to avoid the problems which marred the private-enterprise Atlanta Games.

Michael Knight, the tough 43-year-old state Olympics minister, was named president of SOCOG, replacing John Lillie, chairman of the Woolworths Ltd retailing giant.

SOCOG will organise the Games themselves leaving construction of facilities mainly to the state government or as Knight has put it, "The government is building the theatre, SOCOG is putting on the show."

But Lillie's shock resignation of Friday makes Knight the supreme for the turn of the century.

The state government's move follows concern in the Olympic Movement about logistic and other organisational problems at Atlanta where private enter-

prise had a key role.

Lillie said in a statement that after studying reports of the Atlanta Games and watching operations there at first hand, he felt there had to be "the closest possible relationship between the organising committee, the government of the day and the Olympics Movement generally."

"There was a lack of close-ness between private enterprise and the government at Atlanta and... difficulties flowed from that," Knight said in a weekend radio interview.

He maintained that the new mix of government and private enterprise was "exactly the blend they had in Barcelona and exactly the blend" sought by Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee.

"I absolutely support this move... whenever there has been a strong government involvement and commitment to the Games as in Barcelona and Albertville, the experience has been very, very positive and beneficial," Samaranch was quoted here by newspapers as saying.

Lillie was the second SOCOG president of quit in six months and his resignation came only four days after Telstra executive Gerry Moriarty pulled out at the last minute from his appointment as SOCOG's chief operating officer.

The 15-member SOCOG board has been described by Australian commentators as faction-ridden, and Knight admitted there was a "little bit of fractiousness" and that he would be seeking to get the board "pulling together."

A costly letdown

LAS VEGAS, Sept 9 (AFP): Fans here paid up to 500 dollars to watch two world boxing champions, Mike Tyson and Bruce Seldon.

What they saw was more like Mike Tyson against Greg Louganis — one awesome fighter and one who took a bid dive.

Tyson stopped Seldon after only one minute and 49 seconds here Saturday to claim the World Boxing Association crown.

But fan tolerance for Tyson against outmatched fighters clearly reached an end after the Seldon fight. A crowd of 9,494 yelling fans chanted, "Fix, Fix, Fix," and jeered Seldon for hitting the canvas after glancing blows.

Seldon went down face-first twice, the first time after a right from Tyson that barely grazed the top of his scalp.

"The first knockdown was more of an elbow that must have touched a nerve or something," Seldon said, "it was not a fake."

Jones' first

John Player Gold Leaf driver, Jon Jones, powered his way to the team's first U.I.M. Formula 1 World Championship win of the season in idyllic conditions on Lake Lugano Saturday. Using his unique driving skills and powerboat experience he overcame boat problems to hold off Finland's Pertti Leppala in an intense battle that lasted for two thirds of the race, says a press release.

At the start, Anton Van Heerde rounded the turnbuckly first closely followed by Jones and Leppala. The race was halted on lap 4 due to Sugi-hara's stopped boat drifting on to the racetrack.

This was the opportunity Jones was looking for. As soon as the race was restarted he dived into the first turnbuckly just ahead of Leppala. On lap 26 Leppala overtook Jones who, within seconds, had the lead back in a brilliant manoeuvre.

Every time Jones pulled a lead, Leppala would reel him back in getting close again on lap 33. For the remainder of the race Jones used the back markers to great effect, always leaving Leppala with too much work to do. Jones finally crossed the line just one second ahead.

Jones was elated, "I have never gone a season without a Grand Prix win and I was de-

termined it wasn't going to happen this season. Half way through the race the trim stuck and I had to drive on the throttle and into the wind it was extremely difficult. It's great for the team, great for the sponsor and sets me up for the rest of the season."

John Player Gold Leaf F1 teammate, Paul Blackburn, did not fare so well with his relegation to the back of the grid proving too much for him and finishing in eleventh place just out of the points. The same was true for Abu Dhabi's Humaid Bhakit, who did well to move from seventeenth place to seventh.

Championship leader Guido Cappellini's gamble to start on the back of the grid, forsaking his pole position, backfired badly. Although quickly moving to third place, mechanical problems forced him to make running repairs, losing six laps in the process and finally finishing thirteenth.

Jones' victory moves him to third place in the World Championship, just nine points behind Michael Werner who was forced to pull out of the race following boat damage.

The Formula 1 powerboat circus moves to Gallipoli, Italy, for next weekend's Grand Prix with the John Player Gold Leaf team looking to repeat their spectacular performance.

THE US OPEN NOTEBOOK

LAST IN LOUIS STADIUM

NEW YORK, Sept 9 (AP): Sunday marked the 19th and final US Open singles finals played in Louis Armstrong Stadium at Flushing Meadows.

Next year's final will be played in the new 23,500-seat stadium which sits adjacent to Louis Armstrong Stadium.

SIGNS OF THE TIME

Signs displayed on the Louis Armstrong Stadium scoreboard include:

No smoking in the stadium, grandstand or corridors. Smoking is permitted on the grounds.

Cellular phones must be turned off while seated in the stadium. Thank you.

US Open '96 on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usopen.org>.

POPULAR WEB SITE

The official US Open web site created by IBM and the US Tennis Association overtook Wimbledon's site as the most popular tennis web site of all-time with 21 million hits as of Friday.

Sept 6. Friday's traffic of 3.8 million hits marked a single-day high.

The site's most frequently

accessed features include the current scores; Live Netcam, which displays photographs from the Stadium, Grandstand, Court 16 and Court 17; and the US Open Report, which featured player diaries from Luke Jensen, Gabriela Sabatini and Javier Sanchez.

ANOTHER GERMAN TRIUMPH

For the second straight year, a German has won the US Open Junior Boys' singles title.

Ninth-seeded Daniel Elsner defeated No. 7 Markus Hippel of Austria 6-3, 6-2 Sunday.

Last year, Nicolas Kiefer defeated Ulrich-Jasper Seetzen in an all-German championship match to become the first from his country to win the title.

In 1984, Boris Becker lost to Australia's Mark Kratzmann in the final.

Other former winners include Pat Cash of Australia, Sweden's Stefan Edberg, Javier Sanchez of Spain, Leander Paes of India and Chile's Marcelo Rios.

GIRLS CHAMPION

Mirjana Lucic of Croatia won the Junior Girls' title Sunday by defeating unseeded Marlene Weingartner of Germany 6-2, 6-1.

Lucic becomes the first from her country to win the title.

penza, the goals coming from the head and boot of Otero.

But an own goal from Luigi Sartor on the brink of half-time left Fiorentina fans eagerly awaiting a second-half comeback.

Otero, however, had other ideas, completing his hat-trick with a 67th minute opportunity's goal.

Summer signing Luis Oliveira of Belgium briefly revived Fiorentina's chances with a solo effort only for the deadly Otero to add a 90th minute fourth from the penalty spot.

At Reggiana, Vieri and Boksic combined neatly for Juve's sixth minute opener-ex-Atlanta striker Vieri glancing home the Croat's cross.

But Reggiana drew level three minutes later when summer signing Sandro Tovalieri

penized a mix-up in the Juve defence.

Despite laying siege to the Reggiana penalty area for the rest of the match, Vieri and Boksic both hit the bar when scoring looked easier.

The Croat, in particular, missed a gilt-edged opportunity in the 84th minute when he drove wide with only the keeper to beat.

Perugia marked their return to the top flight with a 1-0 win over Sampdoria courtesy of Marco Negri's 23rd minute strike, the visitors had Yugoslav Sinisa Mihajlovic dismissed for protest.

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