

Brazil's Copa warm-ups

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 1: Brazil are set to play friendlies against 2002 World Cup joint-winners Japan and South Korea in the lead-up to the defence of the Copa America title in Paraguay later this year it was announced on Sunday, reports AFP.

According to a Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) spokesman Brazil will play South Korea on March 28 and Japan three days later.

The 1998 World Cup finalists will also play Spanish club giants Barcelona in April as part of the Catalan side's centenary celebrations and round off their Copa preparations with a May 5 meeting with either Colombia or Chile and play Holland, who they beat on penalties in the World Cup semifinals, in Bahia on June 5.

The Copa America runs from July 1 to July 18.

Rafter finds it pointless

MELBOURNE, Feb 1: US Open champion Pat Rafter said drug testing of tennis players was "unfair" and "pointless" unless officials took action against those found guilty of using performance-enhancing drugs, reports Reuters.

Rafter's comments published in Melbourne's Herald-Sun newspaper today follow a British High Court ruling blocking the International Tennis Federation (ITF) from attempting to have Petr Korda suspended following a positive dope test at Wimbledon.

"I don't care how good a bloke you are. There's no reason why you should get away. I don't care who you are," Rafter said on Sunday after winning the Australian Open doubles title with Swede Jonas Bjorkman.

I went and did a drugs test and I said "This is a bloody pointless operation... I just thought it was a pointless operation, you know".

Bjorkman was also disappointed at Korda's treatment.

"It's sad for tennis because that makes guys think that you've got a chance to get away with cheating," Bjorkman said at the post-match press conference on Sunday.

"I have nothing against Korda. What I've been frustrated by is the situation... we need to be tough on those things when it happens because that's the only chance to get..."

"Drug's out of sport," interrupted Rafter.

The ITF on Saturday said it was considering appealing against the British court decision stopping it from trying to ban Korda after he tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone at last year's Wimbledon.

But ITF communications manager Alan James also said the federation might consider dropping the matter because of the damage it was doing to the game.

The ITF sought the court's intervention after an ITF committee investigating the Korda drugs case took a lenient line and did not suspend Korda but merely took away his ranking points and prize money earned at Wimbledon.

Korda has said he was not aware he had taken the drug.

But the ITF's lenient ruling angered fellow players and many of them gave Korda the cold shoulder as he sought to defend his title at the Australian Open last week.

Serbs not interested

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia Herzegovina, Feb 1: The Basketball Federation of Bosnia's Serbian population has refused Sunday to form a joint body with representatives of the Croatian and Muslim communities, reports AFP.

The Federation of International Associations (FIBA) had been hoping to broker a deal that would see the sport played across the ethnic divide.

Robson tipped to replace Hoddle

LONDON, Feb 1 (Reuters/Internet): Bryan Robson emerged on Monday as the favourite to become the next England coach if Glenn Hoddle resigns or is sacked following his remarks about the disabled.

Robson, a former England team-mate of Hoddle's in the 1980s and now the manager of Middlesbrough, was part of Terry Venables's England coaching staff when the team reached the semifinals of Euro 96.

He left the England set-up when Hoddle was appointed in succession to Venables in the summer of 1996.

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Tony Blair stepped into the row over Hoddle's alleged remarks.

Blair said in a television interview he thought it would be hard for Hoddle to remain in position if the remarks he is reported to have made are true.

The Prime Minister said: "If he has said what he is reported to have said in the way he is reported to have said it, then it was very wrong. It would be very difficult for him to stay. It was very offensive."

Bookmakers William Hill, who are so certain Hoddle will depart that they have stopped taking bets on it, have installed Robson as the 6-4 favourite to succeed him.

Nicknamed "Captain Marvel" in his playing days for battling back from so many career-threatening injuries, Robson played 90 times for England, 70 of them as captain, and is the only man to have skipped three FA Cup final-winning teams. A feat he achieved with Manchester United in 1993, 1985 and 1990. He also played in United's title-winning teams of 1993 and 1994.

Venables, Hoddle's immediate predecessor, would be available immediately following his recent departure from Crystal Palace and would doubtless be a popular choice among certain sections of the media, wide sections of the public and, most importantly, the players.

But he left the Football Association (FA) under a cloud in 1996 due to his off-field business dealings and has vowed England international who stopped playing only at the end of last season, has been tipped as a future England manager and is ranked as 7-1 choice by Hills.

But he has made a poor start to his new managerial career at Italy's Sampdoria, who have gone six matches without a win since he took over last month. He would appear not to be a realistic candidate.

England have never been coached or managed by anyone other than an Englishman -- and it is unlikely the arch-conservative FA would invite the likes of Newcastle's Dutch coach Ruud Gullit, Liverpool's French boss Gerard Houllier or Tottenham's Scottish manager George Graham to apply for the position.

But they could not fail to be impressed by the success Frenchman Arsene Wenger achieved last season when he led Arsenal to the FA Cup and league double. He is ranked at 10-1 in the voting stakes.

If they were to choose a non-Englishman, a more logical choice would probably be Manchester United's Scottish manager Alex Ferguson, who has won every major domestic honour in the game and built United into the top team in the country.

William Hill's rate him only a 25-1 choice, along with the FA's technical director Howard Wilkinson, who took Leeds to the title in 1992.

Wilkinson could be the ideal choice to step in as a caretaker coach in time for next week's friendly against world champions France but whether he would want the job on a permanent basis is debatable.

The strongest candidate would appear to be Robson, who could well be in place by the time England play their next Euro 2000 qualifying match against Poland at Wembley Stadium on March 27.

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Sports minister Tony Banks said: "anybody who disparages disabled people totally insults them," while blind education secretary David Blunkett was reported to have said: "If Hoddle is right then I must have been a failed football manager in a previous existence."

There has been universal criticism of Hoddle's remarks although he himself claims he was quoted out of context. "I can assure you that is not what I said and that is not what I meant," he said.

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Kafelnikov makes most out of it

MONACO, Feb 1 (Reuters/Internet): Leading prize money winners in dollars issued by the ATP Tour on Monday: 1. Kafelnikov 493,835 2. Enqvist 275,488 3. Schuttler 147,367 4. Hass 142,178 5. Lapentti 137,488 6. Rafter 124,332 7. Bjorkman 105,995 8. Martin 104,802 9. Henman 99,709 10. Kucera 74,802 11. Schalken 67,516 12. Spadea 66,052 13. Tarango 64,932 14. Rosset 64,302 15. Santoro 64,042 16. Vacek 62,626 17. Alimi 62,172 18. Pioline 60,572 19. Paes 55,658 20. Hewitt 54,919

Top earners in women's tennis

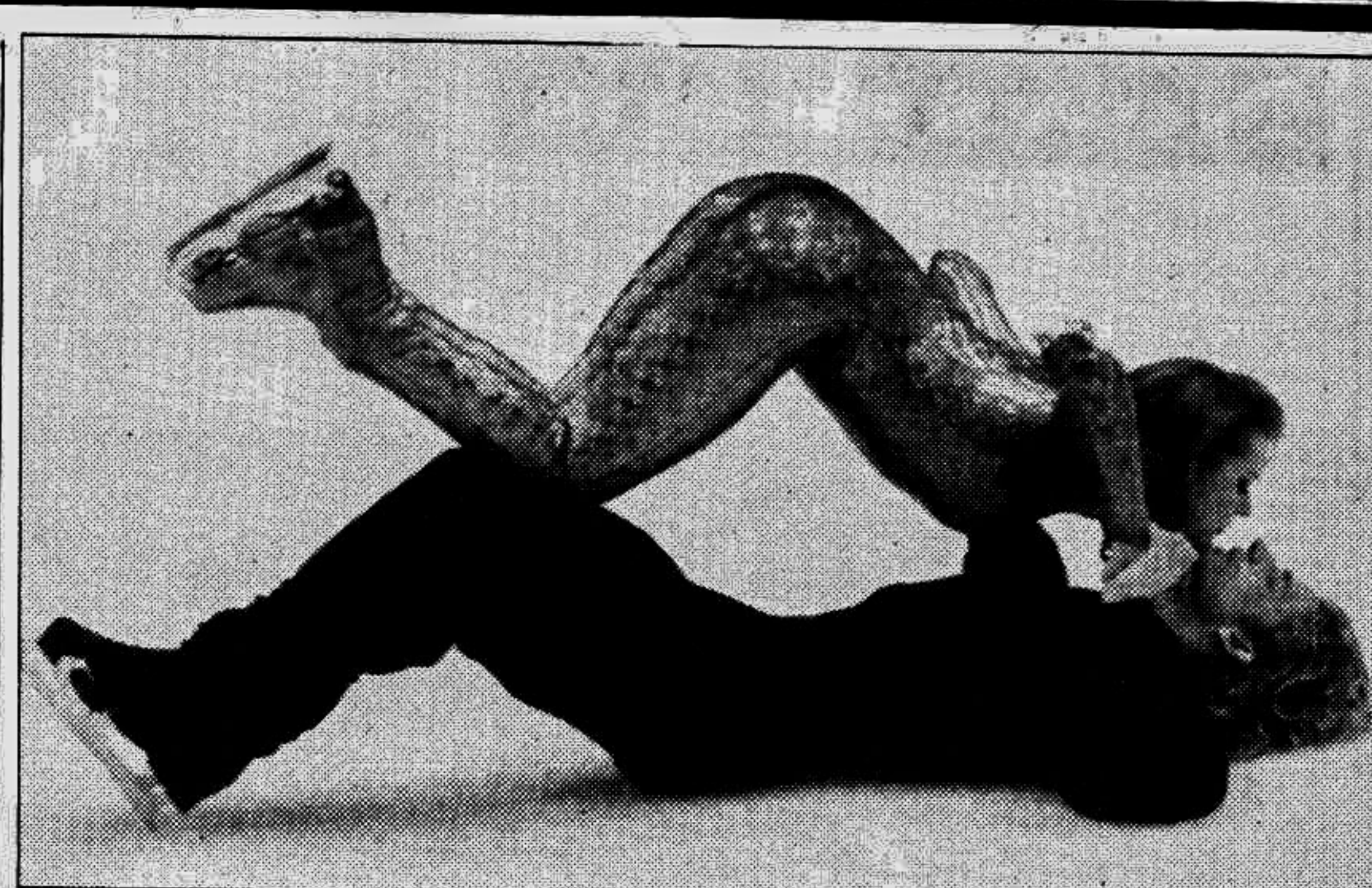
ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Feb 1 (Reuters): Leading money winners this year in women's tennis, according to the WTA Tour:

Player	Dollars
1. Martina Hingis	479,046
2. Amelie Mauresmo	197,542
3. Lindsay Davenport	194,627
4. Anna Kournikova	108,804
5. Monica Seles	97,460
6. Venus Williams	77,436
7. Dominique van Roost	74,000
8. Steffi Graf	64,037
9. Mary Pierce	58,650
10. Serena Williams	57,111
11. Natasha Zvereva	54,754
12. Barbara Schett	50,873
13. Patty Schnyder	49,555
14. Mariaan de Swardt	45,470
15. Chanda Rubin	35,593
16. Amanda Coetzer	35,070
17. Elena Likhovtseva	34,529
18. Julie Halard-Decugis	30,762
19. Ai Sugiyama	30,133
20. Emilie Loit	30,133

WTA top 20

ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Feb 1 (Reuters): Top 20 women's tennis players, according to the WTA Tour rankings:

- Lindsay Davenport
- Martina Hingis
- Jana Novotna
- Monica Seles
- Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario
- Venus Williams
- Steffi Graf
- Mary Pierce
- Patty Schnyder
- Nathali Tauziat
- Dominique van Roost
- Anna Kournikova
- Irina Spirlea
- Sandrine Testud
- Amanda Coetzer
- Conchita Martinez
- Amelie Mauresmo
- Natasha Zvereva
- Barbara Schett
- Julie Halard-Decugis



French pair Marina Anissina and Gwendal Peizerat perform in the closing ceremony of the European Figure Skating Championships in Prague on January 31. —AFP photo

Samaranch retaliates

LAUSANNE, Feb 1: Olympics boss Juan Antonio Samaranch launched a scathing attack on Sunday against media critics who called for him to quit over the Salt Lake City corruption scandal, reports Reuters.

"I am astonished at what is going on," the International Olympic Committee (IOC) president told a news conference.

Speaking on the eve of an IOC executive board meeting in Lausanne which will precede a three-day anti-doping conference, Samaranch said: "We will not deal with the rubbish that is being reported in some newspapers."

As well as criticism of the IOC's role in the Salt Lake City votes-for-cash scandal that has engulfed the Olympic movement, IOC members have been castigated for what is widely seen as their unduly opulent life style.

"For example, I learned today that they are saying in Sweden that I live in a Villa and fly by helicopter every day to the IOC headquarters."

In fact, Samaranch has a permanent suite at the Lausanne Palace hotel about 10 minutes drive from the IOC's Chateau de Vidy headquarters on the shores of Lake Geneva.

Samaranch also referred to reports that the IOC's contract with Olympic hosts cities specified what grade of caviar IOC members expected to be fed during the Games.

"I cannot understand it," he added. Dressed in his Sunday afternoon grab of light blue cardigan and open necked shirt, the normally dapper Samaranch was unable to suppress a grin as he related a Japanese newspaper report that he had thrown a massive party at the end of last year's Nagano Winter Games "with geishers and so on."

"First of all, I was with my

wife. Second, geishers at my age? "No," said the 78-year-old Spaniard. "There are so many silly things," he added. "Who produces all this nonsense?"

Samaranch said the IOC panel investigating members caught up in the bribery dragnet could only deal with facts, not rumours.

"If someone says an IOC member is this or that, please tell us the name and give us the proof. Then we can act. With

rumours, we cannot act. We have shown the world that when we have facts we act very quickly."

Five IOC members face expulsion in March for accepting cash or expensive gifts during Salt Lake City's successful bid for the 2002 Winter Games.

Four others have already resigned and three are still under investigation.

The fallout from the Salt Lake scandal has also threatened to engulf Sydney, hosts of next year's Summer Olympics, and Nagano.

Faced with global criticism from outside the Olympic movement, Samaranch has chosen to put his job on the line by seeking a vote of confidence from the full IOC membership

to this theory, the IOC president sidestepped the issue and said "I understand that may be some people are very tired of seeing me as president after 18 years, may be some people outside the IOC."

"I know many IOC members are interested in being candidates in the next elections (presently scheduled for 2001). It is normal for an IOC member to have the ambition to become president of the IOC."

Executive board member Kevin Gosper of Australia stressed that the executive unanimously supported Samaranch and added "every indication we get from the membership indicates support for the president."

Both Samaranch and Gosper were intent on putting a positive spin on the doping conference, although sources said there had been an unsuccessful attempt to get it postponed because of distractions caused by the corruption scandal.

Glenn to face the FA

LONDON, Feb 1: England coach Glenn Hoddle will have to answer to the Football Association after causing a storm with comments he allegedly made about disabled people, reports Reuters.

The FA's interim executive director David Davies said on Sunday, "Acting FA chairman Geoff Thompson will want to discuss this with Glenn personally."

"He will want to know how a football interview with a football reporter turned into something different."

Hoddle is unlikely however to be sacked from his job because there is no-one at the FA with that authority following the recent resignations of its two most senior executives — Graham Kelly and Keith Wiseman — over a cash for votes row involving the FA of Wales.

The storm has erupted around Hoddle following a report in Saturday's Times newspaper quoting him as claiming that disabled people were paying for sins in a past life.

The England coach was reported to have said to his interviewer: "You and I have been physically given two hands and two legs and a half-decent brain."

"Some people have not been born like that for a reason. The karma is working from another lifetime. I have nothing to hide about that."

"It is not only people with disabilities. What you sow, you have to reap."

Commenting on the interview, Davies said: "I take it seriously. The people I feel sorry for in this are the disabled."

"Glenn has strong personal beliefs. The irony of the situation is the work Glenn has done, publicised and unpublished, for the disabled."

Glenn is horrified by any upset he has caused by what is reported in the Times interview and he is sorry about it.

Hoddle's comments caused a barrage of calls for him to resign.

Freda Murray, chairwoman

of soccer's Disabled Supporters' Association, said: "It is disgusting for a man in his position to be talking like this. I take a boy in a wheelchair and a boy with Down's syndrome to matches, what are they going to think?"

Sports minister Tony Banks said: "anybody who disparages disabled people totally insults them," while blind education secretary David Blunkett was reported to have said: "If Hoddle is right then I must have been a failed football manager in a previous existence."

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Sampras gamble pays off

LONDON, Feb 1 (Reuters/Internet): World number one Pete Sampras gambled by missing the Australian Open but it paid off on Monday when the new ATP world rankings showed him still on top.

His lead, following the first Grand Slam of the year, has been eaten away from 351 points to just 214, but the statistic that counts remained the same.

Five men had the chance to topple the American when the action started at Melbourne Park two weeks ago but were undone either by lacklustre performances or bad luck.

Home hope Pat Rafter fizzled out as early as the third round, losing in four sets to eventual finalist Thomas Enqvist. He could have become the first Australian to top the rankings since John Newcombe in 1974.

Sampras gamble pays off

World number five and French Open champion Carlos Moya wanted to make it past the first round.

World number seven Andre Agassi would have had a chance but Moya's defeat meant he could no longer accumulate enough of the bonus points awarded for victories over top 10 players.

Marcelo Rios, second before the Open and now ranked sixth, pulled out with a back injury without striking a ball.

French Open runner-up Alex Corretja fell to unheralded Norwegian Christian Ruud in the second round.

Eventually it was left to Yevgeny Kafelnikov to take the title.

His second Grand Slam victory — the first was the 1996 French Open — lifted the Russian to number three in the world and he acknowledged Sampras in accepting the trophy.

Sampras gamble pays off

"My last message is to one person -- Pete," he grinned. "This is a great, wonderful feeling. Thanks for letting me do that."

Sampras finished 1998 as the number one player in the world for a record sixth consecutive time.

But the effort of beating Jimmy Connors's record of five straight years in the 1970s took its toll.

Trailing around the end-of-season European tournaments to pick up valuable points left Sampras fatigued and unprepared for Melbourne.

With the ranking record under his belt, Sampras is now gunning for Roy Emerson's record of 12 Grand Slam titles.

Wimbledon 1998 was his 11th and many players were surprised by his absence in Australia -- the first Grand Slam tournament he has missed since the 1992 Australian Open.

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Tuesday 2nd February (All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme)

BBC

6:00 World News Headlines 6:05 USA Direct 6:30 World Living: Earth Report: Renewable Energy 7:00 BBC World News Inc. World Business Report/Asia Today 7:24 Hours 16:00 BBC World News 11:30 World Focus: QED: Pride And Prejudice 12:00 BBC World News 12:30 World Living: The Travel Show 1:00 BBC World News 1:30 Hard Talk 2:00 World News 2:30 World Focus: QED: Pride And Prejudice 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Hard Talk 4:00 World News 4:30 World Living: Earth Report: Renewable Energy 5:00 BBC World News Today 6:30 BBC World News: Natural World: Moonsoon Pt.1 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC World News Today 7:30 World Living: Travel Show: Holiday With Jill Dando 8:00 BBC World News 9:30 Hard Talk 10:00 World News 10:30 World Living: Talking Movies 4:15 Europe 5:00 BBC News 2:30 Hours

CHANNEL [V]

7:00 Turn On TV 8:30 Rewind VJ Sophia 9:30 Zabarast Hits 12:00 Home Arrest 12:30 Zabarast Hits 2:30 First Day First Show 3:00 Turn On TV [V] 4:00 Turn On TV [V] 4:30 Volume Double 5:00 Turn On TV [V] 6:30 First Day First Show 8:00 Home Arrest 8:30 Turn On TV [V