

Radebe, Masinga to miss clash with Saudis

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 10: Key South Africa players Lucas Radebe and Philemon Masinga will miss the Afro-Asian Nations Cup match against Saudi Arabia on September 18 in Cape Town, reports AFP.

Radebe is needed by English Premiership club Leeds United for a UEFA Cup match against Partizan Belgrade of Yugoslavia while Masinga, who plays for Italian Serie A club Bari, is boycotting the fixture.

Masinga was booed by a section of the crowd at the Nelson Mandela farewell match in Johannesburg last month and has reacted by making himself available only for away matches.

Coach Trotter Moloto, under pressure after a string of dismal results, must secure the release of several European-based professionals on UEFA Cup duty next week.

Dreadlocked midfielder Thabo Mngome from Orlando Pirates is favoured to lead Bafana Bafana (The Boys) in the absence of Radebe. The return game will be on September 30 in Rydah.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Andre Arendse (Oxford, Eng), John Tlale (Sundowns)

Defenders: Mark Fish (Bolton, Eng), Pierre Issa (Marseille, Fra), Papi Khomane (Orlando Pirates), Aaron Mokoena (Ajax, Ned), Frank Schoeman (Sundowns)

Midfielders: Quinton Fortune (Manchester Utd, Eng), Ivan McKinley (New England Revolution, USA), Joel Masiela (Sundowns), Helman Mkhalele (Ankaragucu, Tur), Thabo Mngome (Pirates), Shoes Moshoue (Fenerbahce, Tur), Eric Tinkler (Barnsley, Eng)

Strikers: Shaun Bartlett (Zurich, Swi), Benni McCarthy (Celta Vigo, Spa), Daniel Mudiadu (Sundowns), Pollen Ndylan (Goztepe, Tur)

World Club C'ships

Traffic gets broadcasting rights

ZURICH, Sept 10: FIFA and Brazilian television and marketing agency Traffic International signed a contract on Thursday, guaranteeing soccer's world governing body at least 60 million Swiss Francs (39.71 million dollar) in broadcasting rights for the first World Club Championship, FIFA said, reports Reuters.

Traffic will now work with the European Broadcasting Union for the sale of European rights for the competition scheduled for January 5-14 in Brazil.

Five of eight teams — Saudi Arabia side Al Nasr, Brazil's Corinthians and Vasco da Gama, Spain's Real Madrid and English league champions Manchester United — have already confirmed their participation in the inaugural event.

The representative from the other confederations, Africa, North and Central America and Oceania, will be known in October.

The draw to determine the composition of the two groups of four teams will be held in Rio de Janeiro on October 14.

Lazio fans feeling used

ROME, Sept 10: Fans of Italian club Lazio plan to stage a silent protest during their Serie A game against Torino in opposition to what they see as exploitation of their loyalty to the club, reports Reuters.

Lazio supporters are angry over the cost of the club's organised travel scheme to away games and are also up in arms over a decision to sell the television rights to their Champions League games to pay-per-view channel Telepiù.

Lazio's ultras, the club's hardcore supporters, say they will take their place in their traditional home in the Olympic Stadium's Curva Nord (North End) for the Torino match on September 19, but will remain silent and will not show their support.

"We have had our feeling trodden over," Fabrizio, a leader of the Lazio ultras told the daily Corriere dello Sport, explaining the move.

"(Lazio president Sergio) Cragnotti has built a great Lazio and has spent a lot. We are grateful to him for that. But football is about passion and love," the fan added.

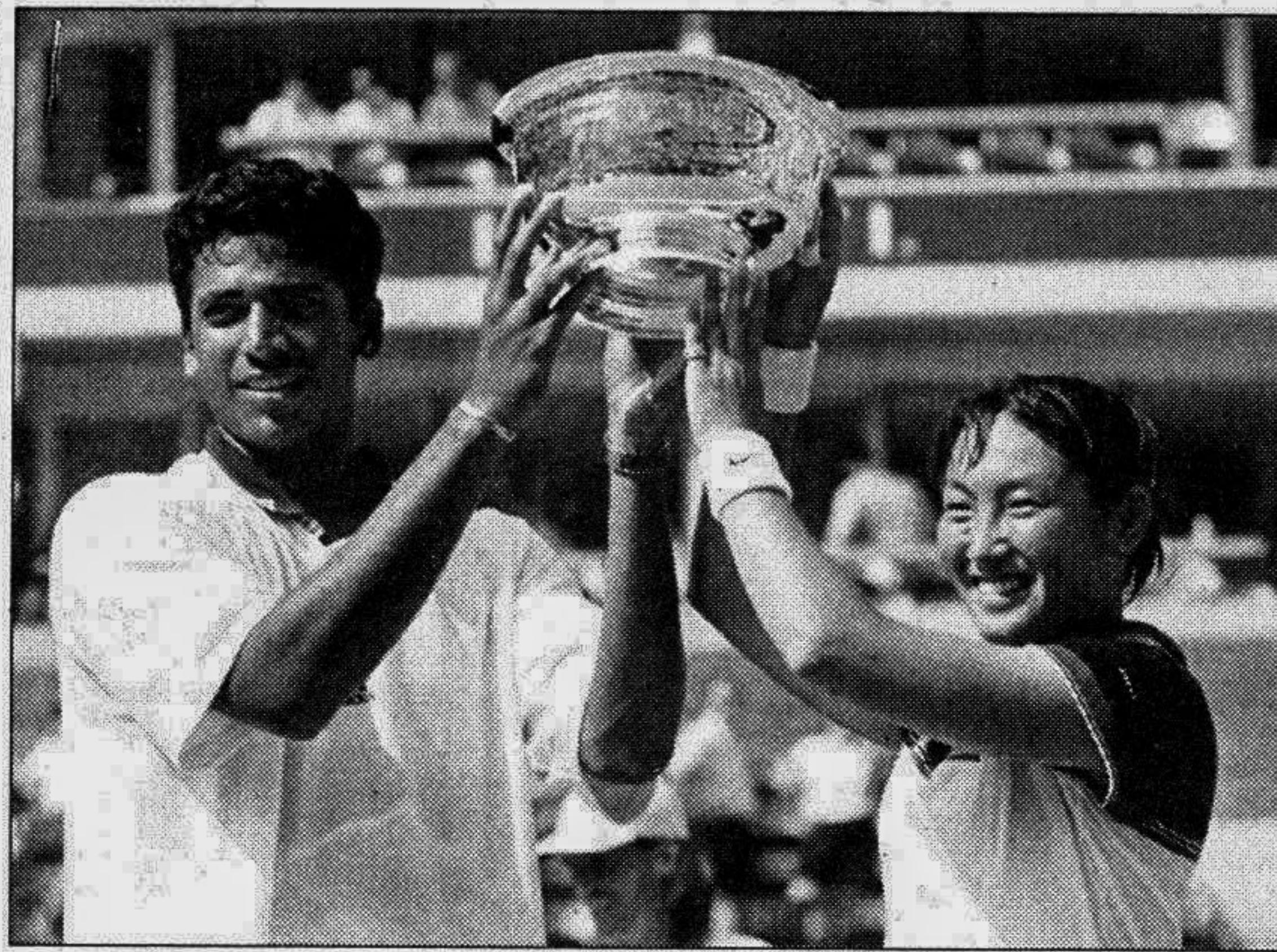
Relations between Cragnotti and the fans appear to have soured in recent weeks.

For the European Super Cup match with Manchester United in Monaco, Lazio were given 3,000 tickets from UEFA but Corriere dello Sport says that only 600 were sold by the club direct to the public, with the remaining tickets sold as a package through a travel agency contracted to Lazio.

Lazio fans are also furious at a late decision that they will have to pay to watch their team's Champions League games.

Italian television company Mediaset, controlled by AC Milan president Silvio Berlusconi, purchased the rights to Champions League games from UEFA earlier this year, but on Wednesday, Mediaset said it had sold the rights to Lazio games to subscription channel Telepiù, less than a week before the start of the Champions League.

While AC Milan and Fiorentina supporters will be able to watch their teams for nothing, Lazio fans will need to fork out for a decoder and a subscription to Telepiù.



Indian Mahesh Bhupathi (L) and Japanese Ai Sugiyama hold up the US Open mixed doubles trophy on September 9. — AFP photo

OPEN NOTEBOOK

NEW YORK, Sept 10 (AP): India's Mahesh Bhupathi and Japan's Ai Sugiyama teamed up to lift the first title at the 1999 US Open Tennis Championships with a victory in the mixed doubles final.

The pair defeated Americans Kim Po and Donald Johnson 6-4, 6-4 on Thursday.

Sugiyama claimed her first Grand Slam crown, while Bhupathi added to the French Open mixed doubles title he won in 1997 with another Japanese player, Rika Hiraki.

"Japanese girls are lucky for me," said Bhupathi, who is also still in the hunt for the men's doubles title with partner Leander Paes. The two are trying to get their third men's doubles Grand Slam title of the year after winning at Roland Garros and Wimbledon.

He said Sugiyama and Paes were the "total opposite" as tennis players, with the Japanese woman preferring to stay back and let him take care of the net.

"Ai played really well from the back today," Bhupathi said. "She stayed back and ripped a lot of balls. Those guys kept coming at us, but she kept passing and lobbing them."

Mayor cancels league game!

BRUSSELS, Sept 10: The mayor of Bruges yesterday called off Sunday's top-of-the-table clash between Club Bruges and Anderlecht because of fears of serious trouble between rival fans, reports Reuters.

Mayor Patrick Moenaert had previously banned Anderlecht fans from attending the fixture, which has been marred before by fighting, and went ahead to call off the game without waiting for the outcome of a legal challenge by a group of supporters from the Brussels-based club.

The Belga news agency said the local authorities took the unusual step after learning that some hard core Anderlecht fans had obtained tickets for the game.

Dozens of Anderlecht fans were charged last January following trouble at last season's game when they ripped up plastic seats and hurled them on to the pitch.

On Wednesday the national soccer association had criticised the mayor's decision to ban "away" fans, warning this could trigger even worse violence outside the stadium.

In an unconnected move, the mayor of Beveren called off Saturday's first division match between Beveren and Westerlo after he had been told a small group of people planned to disrupt the game.

No new dates have been set for either game.

Belgium and the Netherlands are co-hosting next summer's European championship finals.

American Todd Martin makes a backhand return against Slava Dosedel. — AFP photo

Primera Liga preview

Anelka doesn't irk Toshack

of him."

Anelka's ability was certainly recognised by Fernandez when he had his successful spell at PSG. He played the then 16-year-old twice against the French heavyweights Monaco and Metz in 1996.

There will be no room for sentiment at the weekend, however, and Fernandez will be demanding that his leading striker ismael Urzaiz translate his form from the 8-0 midweek thrashing of Cyprus, where he scored a hat-trick, onto the domestic patch against the undermanned league leaders.

Real's arch-rivals Barcelona, who are also unbeaten, entertain city neighbours Espanyol and will have on fire playmaker Rivaldo back after he scored a hat-trick for Brazil against Argentina in midweek.

The other unbeaten side are the surprising Rayo Vallecano, who are Real Sociedad, Real Mallorca, without a point after two games, at least now have a coach in Fernando Vazquez after their original choice Carlos Gomez failed to satisfy the Spanish Football Federation's rules.

Mallorca will try and get their season started against newly-promoted Numancia.

Primera Liga fixtures over the weekend:

Saturday: Barcelona v Espanyol, Deportivo La Coruna v Valladolid, Valencia v Alaves (all evening kick-offs)

Sunday: Rayo Vallecano v Real Sociedad, Atletico Madrid v Celta Vigo, Sevilla v Real Zaragoza, Oviedo v Racing Santander, Malaga v Real Betis, Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid, Real Mallorca v Numancia

NICOLAS ANELKA

Sport

Kuerten pretty pleased

NEW YORK, Sept 10 (AFP): All in all, Gustavo Kuerten can't complain about his two weeks in New York City.

He saw a couple of shows, ate in some nice restaurants, and made it to the quarterfinals of the US Open for the first time in three appearances here.

His last match was a valiant but vain effort against Cedric Pioline, and even though things didn't go Kuerten's way on Thursday the Brazilian was pleased with his performance.

"I was really surprised. I never got so far here," said Kuerten, who became the first Brazilian to claim a Grand Slam title when he won the French Open as an unseeded player in 1997.

It was a new experience, that's what I'm looking for in my career, to win matches, stay in the tournament as long as I can. I didn't have any expectation, I got really far."

He said his lack of success here previously — he reached the third round in 1997 and the second round last year — made things easier.

"Here I was more underdog than at the French Open," he said. "I could take more time for myself, nobody paid too much attention to me. I could enjoy things in the city."

Kuerten said he had seen a couple of Broadway shows, and been out to dinner in Manhattan.

"From Monday to Sunday you can do whatever you want," said Kuerten, who hails from Florianopolis. "In my city, only from Friday and Saturday can you go in someplace. During the week, everything is closed."

While Kuerten didn't have a victory to celebrate on Thursday, his 23rd birthday on Friday offered a chance for further festivities.

"I think I had more chances today because I was younger," Kuerten said, but quickly reversed himself.

"I'm sure I'm wrong, because with more experience tomorrow, it would be different."

On the brink of his 23rd birthday, Kuerten already displayed the wisdom of a veteran in the wake of Pioline's victory.

"It's always tough to get a loss in a Grand Slam especially," he said. "We're also ready to lose because we know nobody is unbeatable, especially me."

"I'm still growing, improving my game. I know that a lot of good players can beat me," he said.

"For sure I'm going to think about it for a few days, but try to forget."

"I have more tournaments to play, so I'm going to lose again. There will come another loss in my mind."

"Life is like this."

Armenian passports for French duo

YEREVAN, Sept 10: France's Yvan Djorkaef and Alain Boghossian became honorary Armenian citizens on Thursday.

The two French internationals were given special passports by Armenian President Robert Kocharyan in a ceremony to honour their Armenian ancestry.

"This is my first visit to Armenia and I'm very happy to be here," said Djorkaef, whose grandfather was born in Armenia.

"This is a special day for me and my family."

Djorkaef and Boghossian were in the Armenian capital as members of the French national group four qualifer.

Djorkaef, who came with his family, scored France's first goal in a 3-2 victory over the hosts.

WC 2006

South Africa's Euro mission

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 10: South African World Cup 2006 bid officials are planning a charm offensive in Europe later this month, trying to convince European members of the FIFA Executive Committee of the merits of their candidacy, reports Reuters.

The meetings come in spite of the fact that two European countries — England and Germany — are among the front-runners in the battle for the 2006 finals.

"We believe that even if Europe has two candidates they are the one group within FIFA who have a wider vision on the future of soccer," said Jordaan.

"It's in the interests of the international football that Africa be given the World Cup to in order to develop the game worldwide."

The globalisation of the game is essential and I'm confident that this message that we will take, will get a positive hearing at our meetings."

South African officials have already paid visits to FIFA executive committee members in 10 countries, placing emphasis on Asia and the Caribbean region, in an attempt to sell their candidacy.

The FIFA executive committee will vote next July on the hosting of the 2006 finals.

Brazil and Morocco are the other two candidates in the five-nation race.

London bookmakers make South Africa even money favourites to win the vote, narrowly ahead of England at 11-10 with Germany at 4-1, Brazil at 14-1 and Morocco at 33-1.

Pioline takes tiebreakers

NEW YORK, Sept 10: France's Cedric Pioline used three titanic tiebreaker efforts and domination at the net to defeat fifth seed Gustavo Kuerten and reach a US Open semifinal match-up with Todd Martin, reports AFP.

Pioline broke Kuerten only once but made some dramatic shots when it mattered most to oust the Brazilian in 4-6, 7-6, 7-6 in three hours and 22 minutes at the Grand Slam tennis event.

"He played very good. He served very good. Maybe I've been lucky," Pioline said. "I just try to be aggressive, just don't let him play, come in, then put pressure on his shoulder."

Seventh seed Martin hit 22 aces in beating 95th-ranked Czech Slava Dosedel 6-3, 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 to join Pioline in a Saturday match for a final berth Sunday opposite Andre Agassi or Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

Kuerten was conquered by a 30-year-old king of 6-6 success who rose to 6-0 in tiebreakers at this Open, 26-9, in 1999 tiebreakers and 128-107 in life-time tiebreakers.

"Since the beginning of the year, I have a good tiebreaker record," Pioline said. "I feel good when it's coming. I'm not afraid. I know I can win."

Pioline also won 63 of 83

points when coming to the net, 76 per cent, using volleys and attacking play to keep the pressure on the former French Open champion.

Pioline, a first-round loser in four of his past five Slams, rose to 3-0 over Kuerten.

Pioline, who lost the 1993 US Open final and 1997 Wimbledon final to Pete Sampras, became the first man in US Open history to oust a defending champion in round one when Pat Rafter retired with a shoulder injury.

The dramatic third-set tiebreaker was among the longest in Grand Slam history, approaching the US Open record of 20-18 by Goran Ivanisevic over Daniel Nestor in the 1993 first round.

Pioline, ranked 26th at age 30, needed eight set points to outlast Kuerten in the thrilling third.

At 9-9 in the third-set tiebreaker, Pioline hit a running baseline forehand winner to reach his fifth set point. He slipped and fell but heard the cheers of the crowd and pumped his fist with joy.

"I run like crazy and I tried to make the shot," Pioline said. "It was good after a big rally. I knew I had to play some winners to beat him. I tried for it and it worked."

Martin rose to 5-0 in matches after those where he rallied from two sets down to win, a feat he achieved Tuesday with an exhausting effort against Britain's Greg Rusedski.

"I'm pretty tired. I felt better than I thought would but not as well as I would like," Martin said. "When I practised I don't think I could have felt any worse. I was really spent. I was pooped and I didn't know how I was going to be able to play. But I didn't have adrenaline then. Fortunately that kicked in."

Martin, whose best Slam showing came in losing the 1994 Australian Open final, reached his fifth career Slam semifinal after having lost in the Wimbledon and Australian quarters earlier this year.

After taking all 19 of his first-set points to win the first set in 31 minutes, the 29-year-old American gave Dosedel his lone break and dropped the set