

Prabhakar to be queried by CBI

NEW DELHI, May 12: The CBI, which has been asked to probe the cricket match-fixing scandal, yesterday said it was planning to question Manoj Prabhakar about his claim that Indian ace all-rounder Kapil Dev had offered him bribe to play below his potential, reports PTL.

After former Indian cricket board chief I S Bindra told an international TV channel about the alleged offer of Kapil Dev, CBI sources said Prabhakar on his own had not yet got in touch with the investigators.

Prabhakar said after Bindra's interview that whatsover he had to disclose he would do that before CBI.

The sources said that in view of his statement whether he chose to volunteer any information on the issue or not, the agency would be questioning him at an appropriate time.

The sources also said that other persons, who have been making allegations about the match-fixing in the past, would also be questioned.

The CBI registered a preliminary inquiry into the match-fixing scandal after receiving a formal letter from the sports ministry on May 2 to conduct a broad-based probe into the scandal.

The CBI has also been empowered to probe any other scandal or allegations concerning the game.

Rajshahi v'ball

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, May 12: Bright Star and Naburun Sangha won their respective matches of the Rajshahi First Division Volleyball League at the Rajshahi Stadium.

In the first match, Bright Star defeated City Club 3-0 (25-12, 25-8 and 25-6) sets.

In other match of the day, Naburun Sangha beat Green Star Club by 3-0 (25-8, 25-8 and 25-11) sets.

Modern Boxing Club will take on Jagarata Sangha and Bondhon Rrira Chakra will meet Ambagan Club tomorrow.

CRICKET

Rajshahi District Second Division cricket qualifying league will begin from May 14 at Rajshahi District Stadium.

A total of 25 teams in four groups will take part in the league. The group champions will qualify for Second Division.

Brown appreciates Fergie's gesture

GLASGOW, May 12: Craig Brown has welcomed Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson's offer to be on hand to give advice to the Scotland manager when Ferguson retires in 2002 - but says Ferguson already helps him out on an occasional basis, reports AFP.

Brown said Friday that he has turned to Ferguson several times during his period in charge of the Scots because he rates him as the best manager in Britain.

Brown said: "Alex already helps out Scotland and I speak to him regularly and ask him for advice."

"Informally he makes an active contribution to the national team and for that I'm very grateful."

"Alex is probably the best judge of a player in world football and he will tell me everything I need to know about future opponents if he's seen them play against Manchester United."

"He was the man who first brought me into the Scotland set-up for the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. There cannot be a more knowledgeable man in world football and any help he gives to this country is invaluable," he told the Daily Record.

Ferguson has spoken of wanting to end his coaching career in Scotland - at the Champions League final of 2002 which is being held at Glasgow's Hampden Park.

He said: "My target is winning the 2002 final, although it would be easier said than done. But wouldn't it be fantastic if it worked out."

What an occasion it would be. Just imagine it, the European Cup final and in my home city. Winning would be the last accolade for a Govan lad like me and my final salute in Rangers and Celtic territory."

Gosper's denial

SYDNEY, May 12: International Olympic Committee (IOC) vice-president Kevan Gosper denied charges of nepotism today after his daughter carried the Olympic flame ahead of a Sydney teenager praised the honour, reports Reuters.

Gosper, a candidate to take over from IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, said he had done nothing wrong in letting his 11-year-old daughter Sophie jump the queue to be the first Australian to carry the flame when it was lit in Greece on Wednesday.

In the face of intense criticism from Australians of all walks of life, Gosper, told Australia's Seven Network that he had done nothing wrong.

"I would like to know what crime I have committed," Gosper said.

"I am shocked and appalled and saddened. I don't know what crime I have committed on behalf of my daughter whose rights I have protected as her father."

The torch was supposed to be collected by Yianna Souleles, a 16-year-old Sydney schoolgirl of Greek origin who had been chosen for the honour and travelled to Greece with some of her closest schoolfriends who had paid their own airfares.

Hingis wins a toughie



BERLIN, May 12: Martina Hingis faced her first severe test this week as she struggled to overcome Croatia's Syla Talaja and reach the quarterfinals of the 1.08-million-dollar German Open WTA event here Thursday, reports AFP.

The top seed was forced to save two set points before winning 7-6, 6-3 but was warned by her mother before the match that she faced a tough battle.

"My mum told me to watch out as she had a very similar game to me, and I had to play her the way I would play myself," said Hingis. "She has a very good backhand and maybe a little bit weaker forehand, but not that much weaker. She runs well and it was quite a workout."

Talaja often got the better of Hingis in the longer rallies during the first set, and apart from being rather slow in reacting to some of the frequent Hingis dropshots matched the world number one in every area. Her groundstrokes were solid and she stepped into the ball with confidence.

She also kept her composure when Hingis broke to lead 5-3. The number 12 seed immediately broke back, and then broke again to lead 6-5 when Hingis carelessly sent a backhand long when under no real pressure.

Talaja then held two set points, but made errors on both.

Anna's French Open in doubt

BERLIN, May 12: The coach of Russia's Anna Kournikova, who tore a left ankle ligament in Berlin on Wednesday, on Thursday said there was a doubt whether she would play at the French Open which begins in Paris on May 29, reports AFP.

Dutchman Eric Van Harten, who has been Kournikova's coach since last autumn, told German television station ZDF that as she had only torn a single ligament and he was hopeful the 14th world-ranked player might recover in time.

However, she has not as yet withdrawn from next week's Italian Open in Rome.

before Hingis broke and then won the tie-break with ease. "At 5-3 I should have done more with that, and two set points in the first set was not the way I wanted it to go," said Hingis. "But the tie-break was easy against her and in the second set I was always up. I was happy to have the first set behind me and not have to play maybe another two sets."

Hingis admitted that she wanted to avoid the upset bug that saw eight of the 16 seeds lose before the third round.

"Yesterday so many favourite players lost, like Anna (Kournikova), (Amelie) Mauresmo, (Nathalie) Tauziat," she said. "The favourites were all dying and you hope you're not going to become one of them."

In other matches, fourth seed Julie Halard-Decugis of France, runner-up to Hingis last year, was beaten 6-2, 6-2 by

10th seeded South African Amanda Coetzer. Fifteenth seeded American Chanda Rubin also fell, beaten 6-1, 6-7, 6-3 as Gala Leon Garcia followed up her win against Anna Kournikova.

There were wins too for Conchita Martinez, Sandrine Testud and Anke Huber, and the unseeded Elena Dementieva followed up her win over Arantxa Sanchez Vicario by beating Kveta Hrdlickova 6-2, 6-1 and Kruger ended the run of German qualifier Blanka Lamade.

The 17-year-old Lamade, ranked 534, was playing in the main draw of a WTA event for the first time. She defeated Irina Spirlea and 14th seed Sabine Appelmans in the first two rounds, but was overwhelmed 6-0, 6-3 by Kruger, who has now conceded just seven games in three matches.



World number one Swiss Martina Hingis in action against Syla Talaja of Croatia in the German Open in Berlin on May 11. —AFP photo

She just wanna have fun!



NEW YORK, May 12 (AP): Martina Navratilova just wants to have fun. She's won all the titles - 167 singles, more than any man or woman, and 165 doubles. And when she retired 5 1/2 years ago, she had earned more than 20 million dollars in prize money.

Now, less than two months before she's inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, the winningest player in open tennis history plans a comeback playing doubles - at least in four tournaments.

"I really just want to have a good time," Navratilova said Thursday from her home in Aspen, Colorado. "I know I can compete. I'm not going to make a fool of myself."

And she wants to see something besides her hotel room and a tennis court.

"Madrid I had never been," she said. "It was Madrid or Strasbourg, the other Sanex WTA Tour event that week."

"And my mother's decided to come. We both will be doing some sightseeing."

Then there's Paris, City of Lights. For Navratilova, it always was simply Roland Garros.

"I enjoyed the French," she said. "But I've never had a chance to sightsee in Paris. I've never been to the Louvre. You just have to save the energy when you play singles. At least I did."

So she is teaming with South Africa's Marianne Sward for a four-tournament swing, beginning in Madrid, Spain, the week of May 22. The pair then will play the French Open, raining so much at Wimbledon, she said. "Last year the sun was shining and I was finally able to get on the courts."

"As you get older, you really appreciate grass courts, how easy they are on your body. I'm playing World TeamTennis again this year. I had to practice, so I might as well play."

She at first thought about playing Birmingham, England, a grass-court tournament held during the second week of the

Eastbourne and Wimbledon.

"If it's not going to be fun, then why do it?" she asked.

The genesis of the "tour" began last year when the sun finally came out at Wimbledon.

"Last year when I played team tennis right after Wimbledon, we practiced at Wimbledon," she said.

That rekindled her love affair with grass.

"I didn't play on grass the last three years because it's been



MARTINA NAVRATILOVA

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French Open," but the Birmingham grass bonuses extremely low.

To get the necessary match play before Eastbourne and Wimbledon, Madrid and the French Open were added.

Navratilova had one other detail to take care of - a partner.

"I just took a few years off," Navratilova said. "I couldn't find a partner. Nobody wants to play with me anymore."

De Swardt, an old friend and hitting partner, suggested the two play doubles together. Navratilova quickly agreed.

At Wimbledon, Navratilova will be busy off the court as well. She just signed a multi-year contract to be a television analyst on Turner Network Television and CNN-Sports Illustrated.

TNT will be televising Wimbledon for the first time this year, outbidding its rivals after HBO decided not to renew its contract. Navratilova had been an analyst for HBO.

"We were all out of a job," she said. "I had a possibility of working for BBC, but I wanted to work for an American network."

Winner of 19 Wimbledon titles, a victory in the doubles would tie Navratilova with Billie Jean King for most championships won at the All England Club.

"Martina's experience with this event, both on the court and as an analyst, makes her a valuable addition to our team," said Mike Pearl, Turner Sports senior vice president and executive producer. "We're thrilled to have the best of both worlds - Martina in the booth for us and on the court."

Her main rivals in the long jump are her compatriot Dawn Burrell, Mirela Dulgheru-Renda of Turkey, Guan Yingning of China and Laciene Golding of Jamaica.

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Rehan wrecks Gopibagh

Sports Reporter

An all-round performance by Rehan Rafique guided City Club to a comfortable five-wicket win over Gopibagh Friends Association in a Premier Division Relegation League match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The Pakistani left-arm spinner captured five wickets in the morning session to restrict Gopibagh to 207 for nine in the stipulated 50 overs. The top order batsman then scored 77 to help his side reach the target with more than five overs to spare.

Rehan took 95 balls for his match-winning knock that included nine boundaries.

City Club middle-order batsman Tutul scored 45 off 73 balls with three fours while opener Wasim Nayeem added 32 off 29 balls with seven boundaries.

Earlier, electing to bat, Gopibagh were wrecked by Rehan's superb 10-over spell that cost 23 runs.

Gopibagh captain Selim Shahed scored highest 77 followed by Topu who chipped in with 50.

City Club, with their seventh win in 15 matches, joined Victoria Sporting Club at the top of the table with each having 14 points.

On the other hand, Gopibagh, who have already ensured their demotion to next season's First Division League, suffered their 14th defeat yesterday.

BRIEF SCORES

City Club v Gopibagh FA
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
GOPIBAGH FA: 207 for 9 in 50 overs (S Shahed 77, Topu 50, Gurmeet 43; Rehan 5/23).
CITY CLUB: 208 for 7 in 44.5 overs (Rehan 77, Tutul 45, Wasim 32; Shamsul 2/49).
Result: City Club won by five wickets.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Super League
Binan v Brothers Union
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Relegation League
Wari Club v Agrani Bank
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan beat Bangladesh

Bangladesh suffered 1-7 goals defeat to giants Pakistan in the classification match of the 4th Asia Cup youth hockey championship in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, reports UNB.

Former world champions Pakistan, who finished third in Group 'A' placing after South Korea and Malaysia, met Group 'B' fourth finisher Bangladesh for the fifth place.

The winning team will fight for the 5th to 6th place while the losing side will vie for the 7th to 8th place on Saturday.

Thomas Cup badminton
Solid start for Indonesia

KUALA LUMPUR, May 12: Indonesia made the perfect start to their Thomas Cup defence on Thursday when they thrashed Sweden 5-0, reports Reuters.

The 11 times men's world team badminton champions suffered only one momentary scare. That came when Thomas Johansson showed some fight in his second game against world number two Hendrawan before losing the opening match 15-5, 17-14.

Sweden's Rasmus Wengberg gave a brave display against 19-year-old prospect Taufik Hidayat but crashed 15-3, 15-9.

The world's top doubles pair of Candra Wijaya and Tony Gunawan trounced Par-Gunnar Jonsson and Peter Alexsson 15-5, 15-1.

China, winners four times, overcame England 4-1.

All England champion Xia Xuanze's cross court smashes and good court coverage proved too much for Colin Houghton, who fell 15-2, 15-3. Ji Xiangpeng, Japan and Dutch open Cham-pion, defeated Darren Hall 15-7, 15-0.

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Roman sojourn over



ROME, May 12: World number one Andre Agassi crashed out of the Masters Series event here on Thursday, as Slovakia's Dominik Hrbaty wrecked his revenge in a 6-4, 6-4 third round victory, reports AFP.

The top seeded American was under constant pressure from Hrbaty, a losing finalist at last month's Masters Series event at Monte Carlo -- also on clay, and put on an erratic Centre Court performance.

Too often let down by his groundstrokes, Agassi managed to pull out some superb winners -- to the delight of a Foro Italico crowd -- but could do nothing to stop 15th seeded Hrbaty breaking to win each set.

For the Slovak, it was sweet revenge after Agassi beat him in

the semi-finals of the 1999 French Open, on the American's road to the title.

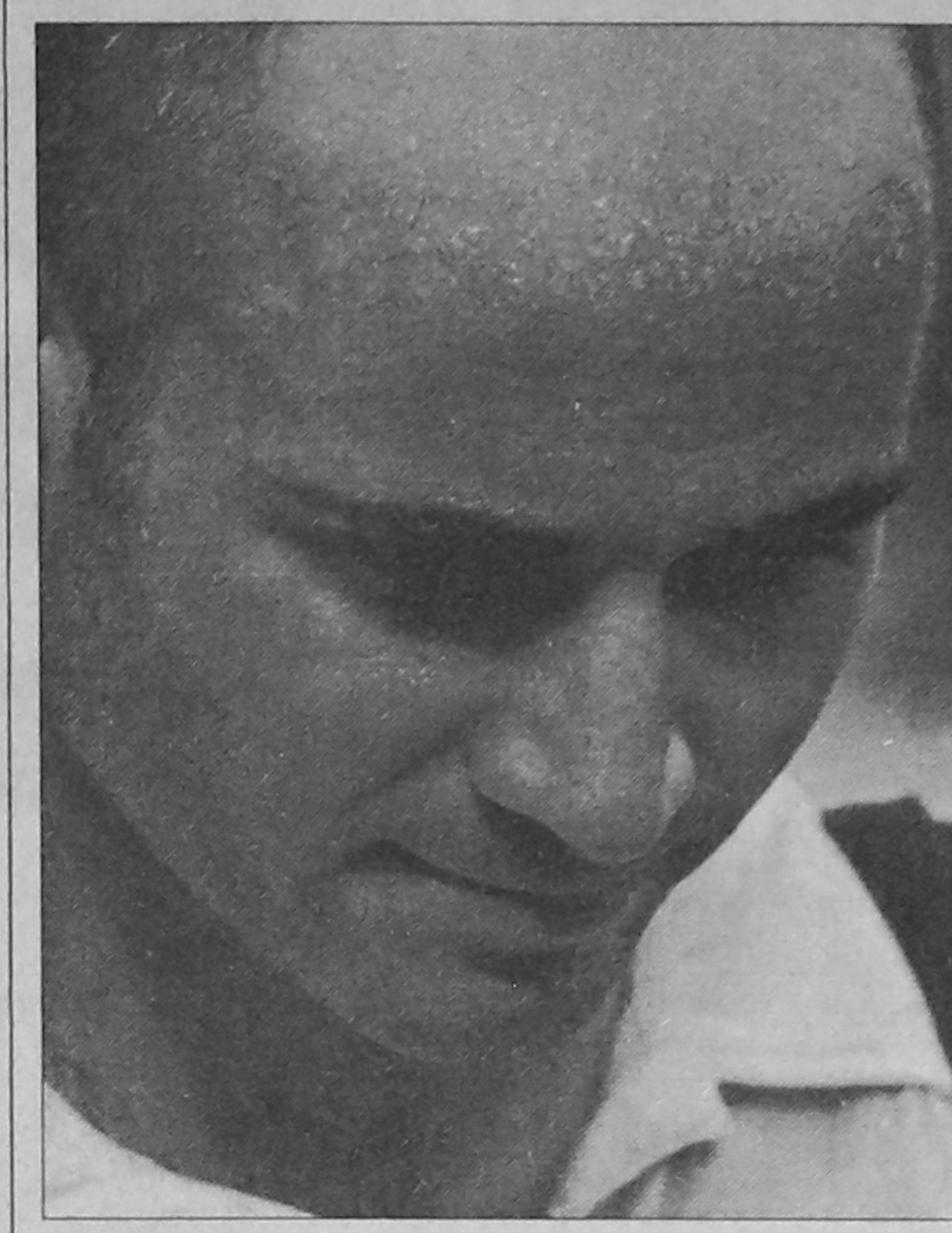
This time, Agassi felt he hadn't made life difficult enough for his opponent.

"He certainly played well today," said the American. "He really likes the ball with a certain pace and I probably could have changed it up a little bit more and tried to get the ball out of his wheelhouse."

"But he was hitting it with conviction and hitting it pretty consistently. I thought he served well on some big points... and he played two good games at 4-5 in both sets."

Looking ahead, Agassi added: "If he plays this well through the French Open, then he's going to be one of the most difficult ones to beat."

Agassi said he would decide later in the day whether or not



DOWN AND OUT: American Andre Agassi is dejected after losing his third round match of the Masters Series to Dominik Hrbaty in Rome on May 11. —AFP photo

Jim's dreams fulfilled



ORLANDO, Florida, May 10 (AFP): Jim Courier began playing tennis in the hope he might find a way to

avoid the world.

Thirteen years, four Grand Slam titles, 58 weeks ranked number one in the world and more than 14 million dollars in prize money later, the 29-year-old American left the sport with far more than he once had ever dreamed possible.

"Truthfully, I set out to avoid having a real job, which I think I have successfully accomplished," Courier told USA Today.

"I just wanted to be ranked inside the top 100. I just wanted to be a professional athlete. Everything else really came as a bonus."

Courier, nicknamed the "Rock", taught himself to play the guitar and drums and has a recording studio in his home here. He plans to serve as an analyst for American television coverage at Wimbledon.

The 29-year-old American who announced his retirement on Monday had a 506-232 career ATP record and 23 tour titles, the only one since 1995 coming last year at Memphis. He ranks fifth in ATP victories and fourth in four titles.

Courier won the 1991 and 1992 French Open titles and lost in the 1993 final. He won the Australian Open crown in 1992 and 1993. His first Aussie crown pushed him into the world number one ranking for the first of 58 weeks.

"Jim opened my eyes to what it took to get to number one in the world and stay there," said Pete Sampras, who has spent 276 weeks atop the rankings.

"He would win a three-hour match on clay, then he would go out for a 20-minute run. He would lose a tough match and then he would head for the weight room. When you played Jim, you knew you were in a dogfight until the last point."

Known for his amazing work ethic, Courier could overwhelm rivals in the early 1990s with conditioning much the same way Andre Agassi has recently.

"You have to be extreme to be exceptional," Courier said. "I couldn't revel in being number one. I had to get to zero."

"When my fitness was at its peak, it was intimidating," Courier said. "I made guys cave in. They would be dejected in the locker room after matches and I would go out for a run, as if the match wasn't enough. I would rub their faces in it. I meant to do that."

Courier's right arm strength faded in 1997 and he spent more than a year seeking an answer before acupuncture did the trick. He rallied for 1999, reached 32nd in the world, got to the fourth round at Wimbledon.

He was the epitome of a hard worker," McEnroe said. "He was very intense. He forced everybody on tour to re-evaluate their training system, to work harder. He wasn't as naturally gifted as others, but he made the most of his game. People have underestimated how good a player he really was. He was a great player."

Courier took up tennis at age seven, learning from his great-aunt Emma, a former college coach. At age 11, he began taking lessons from legendary Australian Davis Cup coach Harry Hopman. At 14 he joined the rising stars at Nick Bollettieri's Academy in Bradenton, Florida.

"Jim was the guy who wasn't supposed to make it. But you can't judge a book by its cover," said Mark Knowles, Courier's academy roommate from the Bahamas who has made his own name in doubles.

"He was a raging bull with the heart of a lion."

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