

No joy for Venus, Tim

Australian Open

REUTERS, Melbourne

Venus Williams' return from injury came to a shuddering halt on Saturday when she was hustled out of the Australian Open 6-4, 7-6 by doubles specialist Lisa Raymond in the third round.

Belgium's Kim Clijsters suffered no such mishap, routing Russian teenager Dinara Safina 6-2 6-1, and home crowd favourite Mark Philippoussis thrilled Melbourne Park with a barnstorming win over Mario Ancic of Croatia.

But 11th seed Tim Henman's Open dreams were ended. The Briton let a two-set lead slip, going down 6-7, 5-7, 7-6, 7-5, 9-7 to Argentine Guillermo Canas in a four-hour, 51-minute epic.

Third seed Venus had been a heavy favourite going into the match, despite this being her first tournament since the Wimbledon final last July, but she was caught cold by 30-year-old compatriot Raymond.

"I am pretty much in shock," Venus said.

"I still can't believe it, but that's the way it is, you win some, you lose some."

Venus was playing her first tournament for six months after a stomach muscle injury and looked flat from the start.

She committed 44 unforced errors in a mistake-riddled performance on Rod Laver Arena and struggled for accuracy throughout.

"She played good, she had a lot of shots rockin' and rollin' today. It

was nice for her," said Venus, runner-up to younger sister Serena here last year.

Raymond had never been

been an injury doubt coming into the tournament, has been in fantastic form through the first three rounds of the year's first grand slam

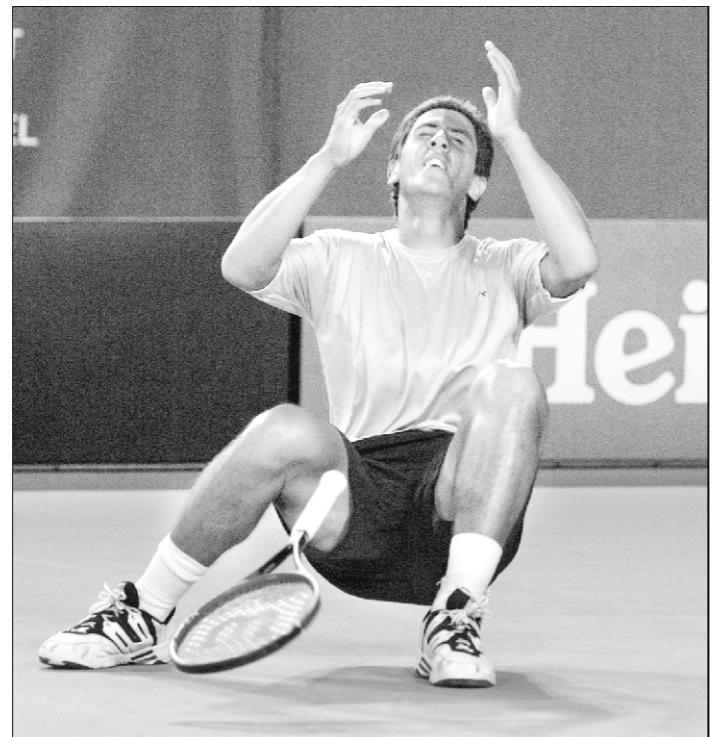


PHOTO: AFP

MARATHON MAN! Guillermo Canas of Argentina falls to the ground in disbelief after defeating Briton Tim Henman at the Australian Open yesterday.

and is yet to drop a set.

On Saturday she knocked Safina off in 57 minutes and will next play 20th-seeded Italian Silvia Farina Elia.

"I knew I had to come into today's match and really step up to the plate," she said.

"I didn't let myself down."

Second seed Clijsters, who had

second week is nice," Clijsters said. "I never really thought I would participate in the tournament so it's definitely a bonus."

Henman hit a total of 100 clean winners in his marathon with Canas, but it was the Argentine who hit the one which counted, a rocket-like forehand past the advancing Briton on his third match point.

Henman was bitterly disappointed.

"That was probably a good match to watch but it is about winning or losing," he said.

"There's not a lot of constructive things I can say about that."

Canas's reward for his superb comeback was a fourth round meeting with compatriot and eighth seed David Nalbandian.

Nalbandian continued to look strong. He out-muscled South Africa's Wayne Ferreira 6-2, 6-4, 7-5.

Local wildcard Todd Reid's heroics were very much a thing of the past when he was outclassed 6-3, 6-0, 6-1 by second seed Roger Federer.

Reid, who overcame vomiting and cramps to beat Armenia's Sargs Sargsian in the second round, never came close to matching the Wimbledon champion, at one point losing 14 games in a row. Federer won in a snappy 74 minutes.

"There's definitely a long way to go," Reid said. "He really taught me a lesson out there. Definitely learning experience."

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