

Sampras back to tennis!

AFP, Newport Beach

A restless Pete Sampras will begin a low-level tennis comeback here Monday in World Team Tennis, but there are no plans for an ATP return or coaching by the 14-time Grand Slam champion.

Sampras makes his return when the Newport Beach Breakers host St. Louis and will play in six more matches for the Breakers over the following two weeks in the US circuit that features teams in singles, doubles and mixed sets.

"I want to do well and win but it's not that cut-throat tennis that I used to be part of."

In ruling out ATP matches or coaching, Sampras also said he had no interest in the circuit of elder stars that includes former rival Jim Courier.

"I'm not quite ready for that sort of deal," Sampras said.

"Playing a few one-nighters here and there is a nice deal but not as cut-throat as Jim's deal. I don't know if I'll ever be ready to come back into that."

Sampras won his tournament farewell at the 2002 US Open and retired at the same event a year later. But lately, the American star that turns 35 next month has felt unsatisfied in retirement.

"In the last year, I was getting a little restless, a little bored finding out what was next for me. I opened myself to playing just to get some structure in my days. It gives me a little bit of what I used to have," Sampras said.

Sampras won 64 ATP singles crowns, including seven Wimbledon titles, five US Opens and two Australian Opens.

After such an epic career, taking up golf and enjoying time with his children did not provide what Sampras needed.

Elizondo's final

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and fifth officials.

FIFA also announced that Japan's Toru Kamikawa will be the referee for Saturday's match for third place between Germany and Portugal in Stuttgart.

FIFA revamps

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As hosts, Germany did not have to qualify for the World Cup.

The United States crashed out in the first round and were highlighted as a particular disappointment by FIFA president Sepp Blatter, second ranked. The Czech Republic also went in the first cull and Mexico in the second round.

The next world rankings -- first created in 1993 -- will be published on July 12.



PHOTO: AFP

Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo is jubilant after winning a point against Russian superstar Maria Sharapova in the semifinals of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London on Thursday.

A fighters' battle

WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

Amelie Mauresmo and Justine Henin-Hardenne clash in Saturday's Wimbledon final with both determined to prove they are fighters not quitters.

World number one Mauresmo laid her Wimbledon demons to rest by beating Maria Sharapova in a thrilling semifinal on Thursday.

The Frenchwoman, who had lost at this stage three times before, made it to the final Saturday at the All England club with a dramatic 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 win over Sharapova to progress to a final clash with Justine Henin-Hardenne.

Mauresmo clinched her first Grand Slam title in January with victory at the Australian Open, but it was a tainted win in many eyes as Henin-Hardenne quit with stomach pains when she was trailing 6-1, 2-0.

Adding spice to the controversy was Mauresmo's admission that she was 'ready to die' on court that day in order to secure an elusive title.

The Frenchwoman had to

endure further doubts over her position as a Grand Slam winner after Michaella Krajicek retired with heat stress in their third round meeting and second-seeded Kim Clijsters retired with an ankle injury early in the third set of the semifinal.

"I think the final is going to be about tennis," said Mauresmo, keen to play down any lingering bitterness over the manner of her win in Melbourne and become the first French winner here since Suzanne Lenglen in 1925.

French Open winner Henin-Hardenne, who needs a Wimbledon title to complete a career Grand Slam, insists the controversy of her Melbourne performance is a thing of the past.

"It's far away for me now. I want to win another Grand Slam and win Wimbledon for the first time," said the Belgian third seed who has yet to drop a set at the All England Club this year on her way to a second final.

"I don't think about what happened because this is a new situation.

"I don't have anything to prove to anybody anymore. I have proved on the tennis court what a fighter I am, how much I can compete."

Henin-Hardenne is chasing her sixth career Grand Slam title and was the runner-up here in 2001, losing in three sets to Venus Williams.

Back then she was just 19, playing in her first career Grand Slam final and intimidated by just being on the same court as the imposing American.

She enjoys a 5-4 career edge over Mauresmo and will start Saturday's final as the slight favourite having easily overcome compa-

triot Clijsters in the semifinals.

Mauresmo also hopes she will inspire the French football team to victory against Italy in the World Cup final in Berlin on Sunday.

"I hope it's a French weekend," she said.

WC travel woes eased

AFP, St. Kitts

Spectators visiting the Caribbean next year for the Cricket World Cup will be able to move between host islands without stopping for passport processing, officials said Saturday.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders meeting here agreed Thursday to the plan, which will help movement by more than 50,000 visitors expected to flock into the region next year for the global sport showcase.

All nine World Cup host nations and Dominica will be treated as a single entity from January 15 to May 15 of next year.

The deal is part of an unprecedented regional security plan incorporating the US advanced passenger information system.

Visitors will be pre-cleared and information will be shared among a pool of more than 400 police and military personnel.

"It is a framework that gives us comfort that we can therefore extend to all persons travelling in these 10 countries during this period of time... a level of freedom of movement that has not existed," Barbados deputy prime minister Mia Mottley said.

It was a timely effort by Read, who reminded the selectors that Geraint Jones is not the only wicketkeeper who can bat just two days before the squad for next week's first Test is announced.

Two of his five boundaries were hooked away in the middle of a spell of short-pitched bowling directed at him by Razzaq and he also used his feet to go down the pitch and loft spinner Danish Kaneria straight for six.

England A resumed on 268-3, but had added only 14 to the total when Key's overnight partner, Ravi Bopara, departed for 15.

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