

Seles gets the boot at U.S. Open

Former champ joins growing list of ousted seeded players

NEW YORK (AP) — Monica Seles is gone from the U.S. Open, the latest big name to tumble from the tournament.

The No. 2 seed seemed to be getting her game back to the level in which she once dominated women's tennis. But she was no match for the sparkling play of Irina Spirlea.

The Romanian won 6-7 (5-7), 7-

Sergi Bruguera 7-5, 6-2, 6-4 and Sweden's Magnus Larsson downed South Africa's Wayne Ferreira 6-3, 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 to gain quarterfinal berths.

Spirlea excelled in every phase of the game, hitting 75 winners to just 41 for Seles. The smooth-stroking Romanian had nine aces and lost her serve just once, in the sixth game of the opening set.

That put the two back on serve since Spirlea had broken Seles's serve to begin the match.

"I see Andre Agassi or Michael Chang winning it now."

PETE SAMPRAS
DEFENDING CHAMPION

6 (10-8), 6-3 to reach the semifinals. Spirlea, the No. 11 seed, fought off one match point in the second-set tiebreak and is now in the semis of Grand Slam tournament for the first time.

Seles' streak of reaching the final at the National Tennis Center came to an end. She won the year's final Grand Slam tournament in 1991 and '92 and was runner-up to Steffi Graf the last two years. She didn't play in 1993 and '94 when she was recovering from a stabbing.

Coupled with Petr Korda's upset win over two-time defending men's champion Pete Sampras and Graf's skipping the U.S. Open because of surgery, Michael Chang is now the only player still in this year's field who competed in last year's title matches.

"I see Andre Agassi or Michael Chang winning it now," said Sampras, who for the first time since 1994 will not be playing on the second Sunday of the U.S. Open.

Both Chang and Agassi hoped to move a step closer to that goal today in their fourth-round matches. Chang met Frenchman Cedric Pioline this afternoon, and Agassi will face 13th-seeded Patrick Rafter of Australia in tonight's final match in the new Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Larsson reached the U.S. Open for the second time in his career. In 1993, he beat Boris Becker in a fourth-round match.

Against Ferreira, Larsson was more steady and kept up the pressure by going to the net.

In what was essentially a clay-court battle, Rios and Bruguera dueling from the baseline with huge groundstrokes. In the end, the Chilean found more angles and made fewer mistakes — 31 unforced errors to 43 for his Spanish opponent.

Rios has matched his best Grand Slam tournament result. The 21-year-old reached the quarterfinals at the Australian Open in January when he lost to Chang.

Earlier today, No. 10 Marcelo Rios pounded his way past No. 7

Sampras won the last two men's singles crowns at Louis Armstrong Stadium in the National Tennis Center. Korda on Monday made sure he didn't make it three in a row, this time in the new 23,000-seat stadium.

The 15th-seeded left-hander from the Czech Republic pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the year's final Grand Slam tournament, knocking off the top-seeded and No. 1-ranked Sampras 6-7 (1-7), 7-5, 7-6 (7-2), 3-6, 7-6 (7-3).

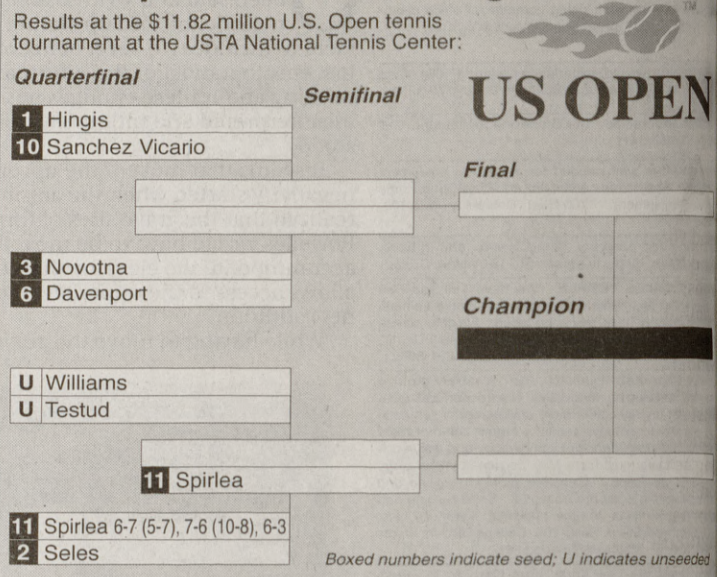
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And Korda had to.

Sampras fired 58 winners, including 24 aces. And when he went up 3-0 in the final set, he appeared ready to capture his 18th consecutive U.S. Open match.

Korda, however, had other plans. "I'm trying to hit the ball over the net and to the other side. That was my only strategy," Korda said. "But when Pete is serving hard, well, it's very difficult to hit the ball over the net. That is really what happened in the fourth and the beginning of the fifth set."

U.S. Open: women's singles



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Neither player could enforce his will. Yet at times, each seemed

to be on the verge of doing just that. But an ace by Sampras or a flé-shot of a forehand was answered just as emphatically by one of Korda's cross-court backhanders that unerringly found the inside

A match that was delayed twice by rain came down to the final-set tiebreaker — roulette, Korda called it. Sampras started the tiebreaker with a weak forehand into the net, then fell behind 4-0 when Korda ripped a backhand cross-court pass. The last of Sampras' aces made it 4-1, but Korda came right back with an ace of his own, his 15th. A few points later, Korda closed it out with a service winner.

Korda's victory, his first in six matches over Sampras since the 1993 Grand Slam Cup, ended Sampras' bid for a third Grand Slam tournament title this year — he won the Australian Open and Wimbledon — and the 11th major of his career, which would have put him one behind career leader Roy Emerson.

"It kind of reminded me of my match against Alex Corretja last year," Sampras said. "I ended up winning that and winning the tournament. This time I lost."

Maybe what goes around comes around.

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Playing hardball

Executive council discusses realignment

NEW YORK (AP) — With as many as 10 realignment plans still under consideration, baseball's executive council meets Wednesday in Chicago to assess what teams want.

they would switch to the National League.

That would leave 16 teams in the NL and 14 in the AL, solving the interleague play scheduling problem.

The radical realignment plan, in which 15 teams would switch leagues, is dead or close to it, several officials said Tuesday on the condition they not be identified. That plan would have placed the New York Mets and Yankees in the same division, and also would have placed the Chicago Cubs and White Sox in the same division.

But there still doesn't appear to be a consensus on whether each league should have three divisions or two.

In addition, Texas would like to be in the same division with Houston, but the Astros don't want to switch to the AL.

However, there still is sentiment for realignment in order to keep Tampa Bay from winding up in the AL West, to reduce the number of early evening and late night televised games in many markets and to avoid having 15 teams in each league, which would necessitate an interleague game nearly every day.

There appears to be widespread sentiment for all the West Coast teams being in the NL. While the Giants object to having Oakland in the same division, nearly all other teams appear to be in favor of such a plan.

According to the officials, Montreal, Florida and Philadelphia have expressed a willingness to shift to the American League, and Anaheim, Kansas City, Oakland and Seattle have said

Owners hope to vote on realignment when they meet in Atlanta from Sept. 16-18. It then would take approximately a month for officials to develop a draft of the 1998 schedule.



schedules, and owners say they would switch to an unbalanced schedule if they realign.

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