

TRIALS AND TRIUMPH Sampras wins seventh Wimbledon and sets Grand Slam record

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — By the dying light, Pete Sampras served himself two huge pieces of history Sunday — a record-tying seventh Wimbledon and a 13th Grand Slam title that made him king of the slams.

Twinkling flashbulbs lit up Centre Court like fireworks in the night when Sampras kissed the trophy once again, his eyes glistening from the tears he had shed moments earlier after he whacked his final service winner to beat Patrick Rafter 6-7 (10), 7-6 (5), 6-4, 6-2.

Rarely emotional on court, Sampras showed how much this victory meant to him as he bent over in tears after the final point, then climbed up into the stands in a tearful embrace with his mother and father, watching him win a Grand Slam in person for the first time.

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SAMPTRAS

"I wanted them to be a part of it," the 28-year-old Sampras said. "As much as I like to say I'm going to be back here every year, there's no guarantees. Win or lose today, I was going to invite them here. I'm glad they hopped on the plane and made the trip."

Sam and Georgia Sampras flew in from Southern California only the day before and sat high above Centre Court to watch their son pass Roy Emerson for the most Grand Slam championships and tie Willie Renshaw, a player in the 1880s, for the most Wimbledon titles.

"Time will tell if it will be broken," Sampras said of the Grand Slam record. "I think in the modern game, it could be difficult. It's a lot of commitment, a lot of good playing at big times. It's possible. I mean, the next person might be 8 years old, hitting at a park somewhere around the world."

Sampras has won 28 straight matches at Wimbledon, extending his mark there to 53-1 over the past eight years.

"This is the greatest player ever at Wimbledon," former three-time champion John McEnroe said. "This guy's not someone you can put anyone up against, nobody. No one has ever come close to Pete."

Sampras is only the sixth player in history to win Wimbledon four straight years. The last to do it was Bjorn Borg, who won five straight from 1976-80.

No Wimbledon title had ever come with more pain and difficulty than Sampras suffered in this one, dealing with acute tendonitis above his left ankle from the second round on. He could not practice between matches and could not warm up before them until the final. No final took longer to win or ended later than this one with four hours of rain delaying the start

and interrupting play twice.

It ended at 8:57 p.m., after 3 hours, 2 minutes of actual play on a Centre Court that has no lights, and they could not have played much longer. If Rafter, the two-time U.S. Open champion, had won the fourth set, they would have had to return on Monday.

"It was difficult in the end," Sampras said. "We only had maybe 10 minutes left to playing. I think we both knew by 9 o'clock they were going to call it. It would have been a tough night of sleep."

"It's not easy to play out there under these conditions. The nerves, the emotional roller coaster we both went through today, coming back, on and off, on and off. It's just amazing how it all worked out. It really is amazing how this tournament just panned out for me. I didn't really feel like I was going to win here, I felt I was struggling."

Sampras had said before the match that as long as his right arm held up, he would be a threat. It held up fine. Rafter could not return Sampras' blur of serves in the afternoon, and he surely could not return them in the fading light. Sampras served 27 aces at up to 133 mph, and had 46 more unreturned serves as he averaged an incredible 123 mph on first serves.

Sampras faced only two break points and won once more without yielding a single game on his serve. Rafter could not break him in 21 service games, just as Boris Becker could not break him in 19 in 1995. In his seven title matches, Sampras has dropped serve only four times in 131 games.

The only time Sampras buckled was in the first-set tiebreaker. He had lost only four points on serve in the first set, three of them on double-faults, and double-faults came back to haunt in the tiebreaker. He hit one to fall behind 10-9, saved that set-point, but then lost the set with his fifth double-fault.

"We all choke," said Sampras, who wound up with 12 double-faults. "No matter who you are, you just get in the heat of the moment. The title could be won or lost in a matter of a couple of shots. I really felt it slipping away. I felt like I was outplaying him for the first set. I didn't get the break. I was outplaying him a little bit in the second. Comes down to a tiebreaker, anything can happen. Just roll the dice."

They rolled the dice in the second-set tiebreaker, and this time Rafter threw snake eyes. Serving with a 4-1 lead, he netted a volley, double-faulted, then netted a forehand to let Sampras tie it. Sampras then smacked a service winner and won his fifth straight point with a stunning inside-out forehand cross-court that zipped past Rafter. Sampras punctuated the moment with a big uppercut in the air, his first demonstration of emotion in the match, and two points later he put the set away with a solid volley.

Right there, the match was virtually won.

"There's a lot of nerves out there," Sampras said. "We both were feeling it. I lost my nerve in the first set. He lost his nerve 4-1 in the second breaker. ... Somehow I got through that tiebreaker. From a matter of feeling like I was going to lose the match, I felt like I was going to win the match within two minutes. That's grass court tennis."

Rafter admitted the tension got to him in that tiebreaker. "I did get a little bit tight," he said. "It was an opportunity for me to go up two sets to love. From there it's a very tough position, as Pete knows, to come back from that. But that's what happens when you get tight."

When Sampras broke Rafter for the first time for a 3-2 lead in the third set, the Australian bounced his racket on its head twice as he headed for his chair. He had the look of a man staring at defeat, even if the end was more than an hour away. As the light faded, so did Rafter, going down another break, and going down hard.

"I wasn't getting his serve back anyway," Rafter said. "I didn't really care if it was midnight, really. When you're down 5-2 in the third, double break, mate, it's sort of hard work being out there. Mentally, I sort of had done my bolt."

WIMBLEDON Winners

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Gentlemen Singles

PETE SAMPRAS

Ladies Singles

VENUS WILLIAMS

Gentlemen Doubles

TODD WOODBRIDGE

MARK WOODFORDE

Ladies Doubles

(semifinals)

JULIE HALARD-DECUGIS
AI SUGIYAMA

SERENA WILLIAMS
VENUS WILLIAMS

Mixed Doubles

DONALD JOHNSON

KIMBERLY PO

Head over heels



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Lifeguard **Stephen Levall** of Hurst, Texas takes to the water during a water rescue relay at the Texas Super Guard Contest at Adamson Lagoon in College Station on Saturday. Lifeguarding teams from all parts of the state came out to compete in various timed events and real-life rescue scenarios.

Injuries hurting All-Star game lineup

ATLANTA (AP) — The best place to find baseball's top All-Stars this week is the trainer's room.

Ken Griffey Jr., Barry Bonds, Cal Ripken and Greg Maddux became the latest casualties Sunday, and there was a chance Mike Piazza would join them.

Mark McGwire, Pedro Martinez, Alex Rodriguez and Manny Ramirez already were scratched from Tuesday night's game at Turner Field because of injuries.

All of a sudden, a list of the dropouts seems more imposing than anything the AL and NL actually will trot out.

"We were looking at who we could've had if everybody was healthy, and it looked like it could've been one of the best All-Star lineups of all-time," said Atlanta third baseman Chipper Jones, a starter. "It's disappointing."

So much for a power-packed, middle of the order for the NL minus starters McGwire, Bonds and Griffey, the top three home run hitters in the league.

"They've been bugging me for a lineup the last few days," said NL manager Bobby Cox of the Braves, "but I just don't know who I can provide right now."

Cincinnati pitcher Danny Graves, Arizona outfielder Steve Finley, Baltimore shortstop Mike Bordick and Toronto third baseman Tony Batista are among the replacements coming to play.

Chicago White Sox slugger Frank Thomas, still upset that he was left off the American League roster, is not.

"I've got plans and I'm not changing them for nobody," Thomas said before Sunday's game against the Cubs at Wrigley Field.

Injuries and All-Star games are not strangers. Tony Gwynn and Jose Canseco missed last year at Fenway Park and, when the game was previously held in Atlanta in 1972, five players originally picked were absent: Luis Aparicio, Amos Otis, Freddie Patek, Gary Nolan and Joe Coleman.

Piazza's status was in doubt after he sustained a concussion Saturday night when hit in the helmet by Roger Clemens' fastball.

The catcher, voted to start, was hospitalized after the beating in the New York Mets' game at Yankee Stadium.

Twelve dead in soccer stampede in Zimbabwe

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Twelve people died in a soccer stampede, set off when police fired tear gas at bottle-throwing fans during a World Cup qualifier Sunday between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Players from both teams choked and writhed on the field, covering their faces as tear gas spread through the stadium.

The 12 victims were dead on arrival, Davison Sadza, head of the Parirenyatwa hospital, told state radio.

Four stampede victims were in critical condition and many others were injured, he said.

A doctor said most of the deaths were from internal injuries consistent with being crushed.

Anxious relatives waiting for news gathered outside the hospital's emergency ward.

Fans hurled bottles and other items onto the field after South Africa scored its second goal in the 84th minute, giving the visitors a 2-0 lead.

Police then fired tear gas at the crowd of more than 50,000.

A stampede broke out as the fans scrambled to leave National Sports Stadium. A fire hydrant was torn from its mountings, spraying water over fleeing fans.

Stadium officials called the police response a "total overreaction," the South African Press Association reported.

The game was called off with 10 minutes left, but South Africa's 2-0 victory over Zimbabwe was ruled official.

This marked the fourth time in four years there were crowd deaths at a World Cup qualifier.

Nine were crushed during a stampede at in Zambia in 1996.

At least 78 were killed in a stampede that October at Guatemala City, and at least three died this past April 23 in Liberia in an overcrowded stadium.

Among the players in Sunday's game were three who play for English clubs — Quinton Fortune and Eric Tinkler of South Africa and Peter Ndlovu of Zimbabwe.

The violence came three days after South Africa was denied in its bid to become the first African country to hold the World Cup. Germany was awarded the 2006 tournament in a 12-11 vote by soccer's ruling body.

South Africa made it to the first round of the 1998 World Cup and placed third in this year's African Nations Cup.

Zimbabwe has never qualified for the World Cup and did not qualify for this year's African Nations Cup.

The game was one of eight World Cup qualifiers, all in Africa, on Sunday.

In April, rioting fans in Kenya forced officials to abandon a World Cup qualifier between Kenya and Malawi.

Fans ripped out stadium seats and littered the field with debris. The 0-0 tie was declared the official score.