

France's No. 1 player tries for Serena upset

Charles Bricker
South Florida Sun-Sentinel (KRT)

PARIS — This is the day and this is the place where Amelie Mauresmo can finally purge the nerves and bad history that have diminished her reputation among French tennis fans for years.

Although twice last year, at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, she played to reach a Grand Slam final, Tuesday's quarterfinal against top seed and defending champion Serena Williams is, in some respects, Mauresmo's most important match.

She's in her home country, not London or New York, and the French will pack into the Phillippe Charrier stadium court, virtually demanding that their No. 1 woman player, who lives in a Paris suburb, steel herself against the best player in the world and perform at Roland Garros the way she performs in other countries.

Even though she defeated Williams on May 17 in the semifinals at Rome, Mauresmo cannot be favored in this match. There is a Grand Canyon of difference between Rome and Paris. Or, as Williams put it that day, "Better to lose here than Roland Garros."

Still, could there be a better time

for the 23-year-old French woman to disrupt the flow of Williams' streak of four consecutive Grand Slam titles? She has the confidence of having beaten her for the first time, and she is buoyed by Venus Williams' upset loss of two days ago.

For the first time in a year, small cracks are appearing in the Williams armor. Now, can Mauresmo widen them?

"She hasn't lost a match in a Grand Slam in a year. It's going to be interesting," Mauresmo said.

Assuming rain, which hung around much of the morning on Monday, doesn't reappear and wipe out this afternoon's program, the women will get down to the final four today.

The winner of the Williams-Mauresmo match will play the winner of Justine Henin-Hardenne vs. Chanda Rubin. In the bottom half of the draw, Kim Clijsters, the No. 2 seed, plays the resurgent Conchita Martinez, who at 31 is resurrecting her career, and the winner faces either Vera Zvonareva or Nadia Petrova.

Mauresmo doesn't have a classic service motion, but she gets plenty of power on the ball and her back-

hand down the line is a constant threat. "Actually, I think she hits a cross-court almost better," said Williams.

Mauresmo believes she played her best tennis in Rome, coming back from a first-set loss in which she was down 5-0 before she found any sort of rhythm.

But things have a way of changing for her in Paris, where she has never gone past the round of 16 in eight years. In 2001, she began with a 31-3 record, then was upset in the first round at the French by Jana Kandarr, who has never won a WTA tour title.

In 2002, concerned that the French media were pressuring her too much, she shut off interviews before the tournament, submitting to questions only after her matches. She went out in the fourth to Paola Suarez, another player she should have beaten.

If Williams wins a fifth straight Slam, equaling the effort of Steffi Graf in 1988-89, she'll have to go through three tough players — Mauresmo and then probably Henin-Hardenne and Clijsters.

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or other matters) and "peirastic" (fitted for trail or test, experimental). That's like three Randy Johnson fastballs in a row, and Sai jacked every one out of the park like Barry Bonds.

Then the competition got whittled to two, and Sai started sweating. In the 12th round, it was Sai and Evelyn Blacklock, a steely eyed eighth grader from New York. Evelyn was a no-nonsense speller, hardly asking for definitions before firing off her spellings.

But in the first round of the finals, she spelled "seriatim" as s-i-r-i-a-t-i-m. Oooh. Seriatim means "in a series," and Evelyn looked like she was out of the series.

But Sai couldn't put away the win. He was like Armando Benitez blowing a save for the Mets. He misspelled "gadarene" as g-a-d-o-r-e-n-e. Double oooh. The competition was still on.

Finally, in the 14th, Evelyn missed a silent "g" and spelled "gnathonic" as n-a-t-h-o-n-i-c. Brutal. So Sai came in and finally dispatched Evelyn, spelling "rhathymia" and "pococurante" in rapid succession. He raised the cup as champion.

nement, overcoming the likes of Stanford, California-Santa Cruz and Oregon State.

"The high point of the year was winning the Northwest region," Wiggins said. "Nobody picked us to win that tournament."

With the men's team getting plenty of attention, the women's ultimate team looked as if its season was heading toward a promising end as they finished the regular season ranked No. 5 in the nation. But as with the men, the women had to deal with the rest of the talent-heavy Northwest region, which featured the top five teams in the country. The Ducks placed fourth in the regional tournament, failing to make the national tournament.

Jon Roetman is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

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large Bee trophy would've crushed Samir this year, so he'll come back when he's a little bigger and win the darn thing.

The Funniest Voice award belonged to Nicholas Truelson, a seventh grader from South Dakota. Nicholas had bulletproof glasses and a voice that was all nose, but he could've kicked the dress pants off anybody else in the competition. No, really, he has a brown belt in tae kwon do.

Nicholas never had to spell "tae kwon do," which is difficult but would've been a cakewalk compared to "bombycine," which he misspelled b-o-m-b-i-c-i-n-e in the 10th round — and finished sixth. Talk about heartbreak. I would've gone for the "i" too. Bombycine is a silky fabric. But you knew that.

Then there was the champion. The greatest speller in the land, Sai. In the later rounds, Sai spelled "halogeton" (a coarse annual herb; what's with all the plants?), "dipnoous" (having two openings for the entrance of air

Ultimate

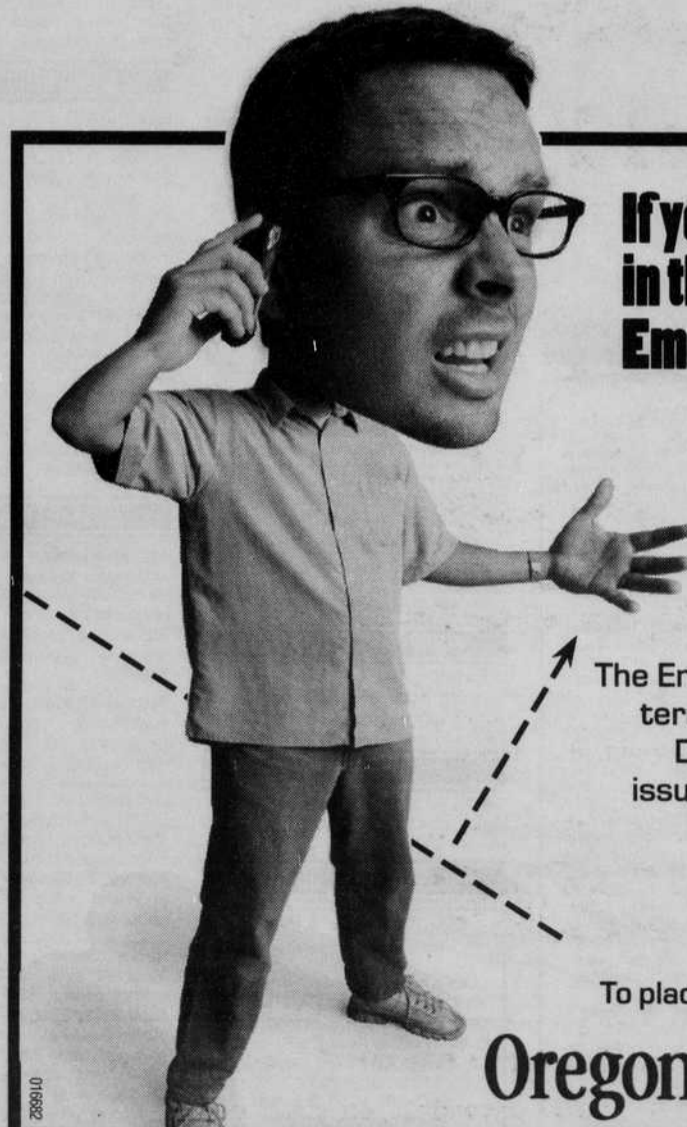
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championship bracket, defeating Pennsylvania 15-8, Williams 15-7, Ohio State 15-7, William & Mary 15-5 and Carleton 15-13.

As soon as the season ended, next season began for the Ducks. The recruiting process plays a large roll when competing in the loaded Northwest region. The Ducks will return 14 of 22 players next year and look to add to an experienced roster with a strong recruiting class.

"We should have a very strong team next year," Wiggins said. "If we recruit well, we should be good."

Even with winning the Callahan Award and placing second in the nation, Wiggins said his favorite memory of the season was coming out on top in the Northwest regional tour-



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