

U.S. Open Releases '98 Draw

Americans Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi are on a collision course for the quarterfinals at the Open.

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pete Sampras will be tested as he chases history at the U.S. Open.

Sampras was handed a difficult draw Wednesday for the season's final Grand Slam tournament, with a potential quarterfinal meeting with Andre Agassi.

And if he gets by the eighth-seeded former champion, Sampras then could face defending champ Patrick Rafter in the semifinals, a major obstacle in his quest for a fifth title at Flushing Meadow and record-tying 12th Grand Slam tournament singles crown.

Sampras, who won his fifth Wimbledon singles title in July, needs one more crown to match the record dozen won by Australian Roy Emerson.

Defending women's champion Martina Hingis drew a potentially tough route to the finals, too. The women's top seed faces a qualifier in the opening round. Then the fun begins.

Hingis' second-round foe would be either 1997 French Open champion Iva Majoli of Croatia or Germany's Anke Huber. Majoli, ranked 20th in the world, and Huber, 21st, will battle in the toughest first-round matchup.

In the fourth round, if the seedings hold, Hingis would take on 16th-seeded Ai Sugiyama of Japan, possibly followed by No. 6 Monica Seles, who has beaten Hingis in both of their meetings this year.

Hingis and Venus Williams, who played for the women's title last year, were placed in opposite halves of the draw, meaning they can only meet in another championship match.

With Sampras, Agassi and Rafter in the top half of the men's draw are hard-serving Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded 14th and Britain's Greg Rusedski, last year's runner-up who holds the record for the fastest serve.

If the seedings hold, Agassi would play Kucera, Rafter would face Ivanisevic and Bjorkman would take on Rusedski in the fourth round.

The fourth-round pairings in the bottom half of the men's draw could pit No. 5 Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands against No. 11 Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia, No. 4 Petr Korda of the Czech Republic against No. 13 Tim Henman of Britain, No. 7 Alex Corretja against No. 10 Carlos Moya in a battle of Spaniards, and Rios against No. 16 Albert Costa of Spain.

Steffi Graf, winner of the last two opens in which she has played, meets Corina Morariu in the first round. Graf missed last year's tournament after knee surgery but was seeded eighth this time despite being ranked 38th.

Another interesting first-round women's match sends Wimbledon champion and No. 3 seed Jana Novotna against Jennifer Capriati, a semifinalist at the National Tennis Center in 1991 before burnout and personal problems interrupted her career.



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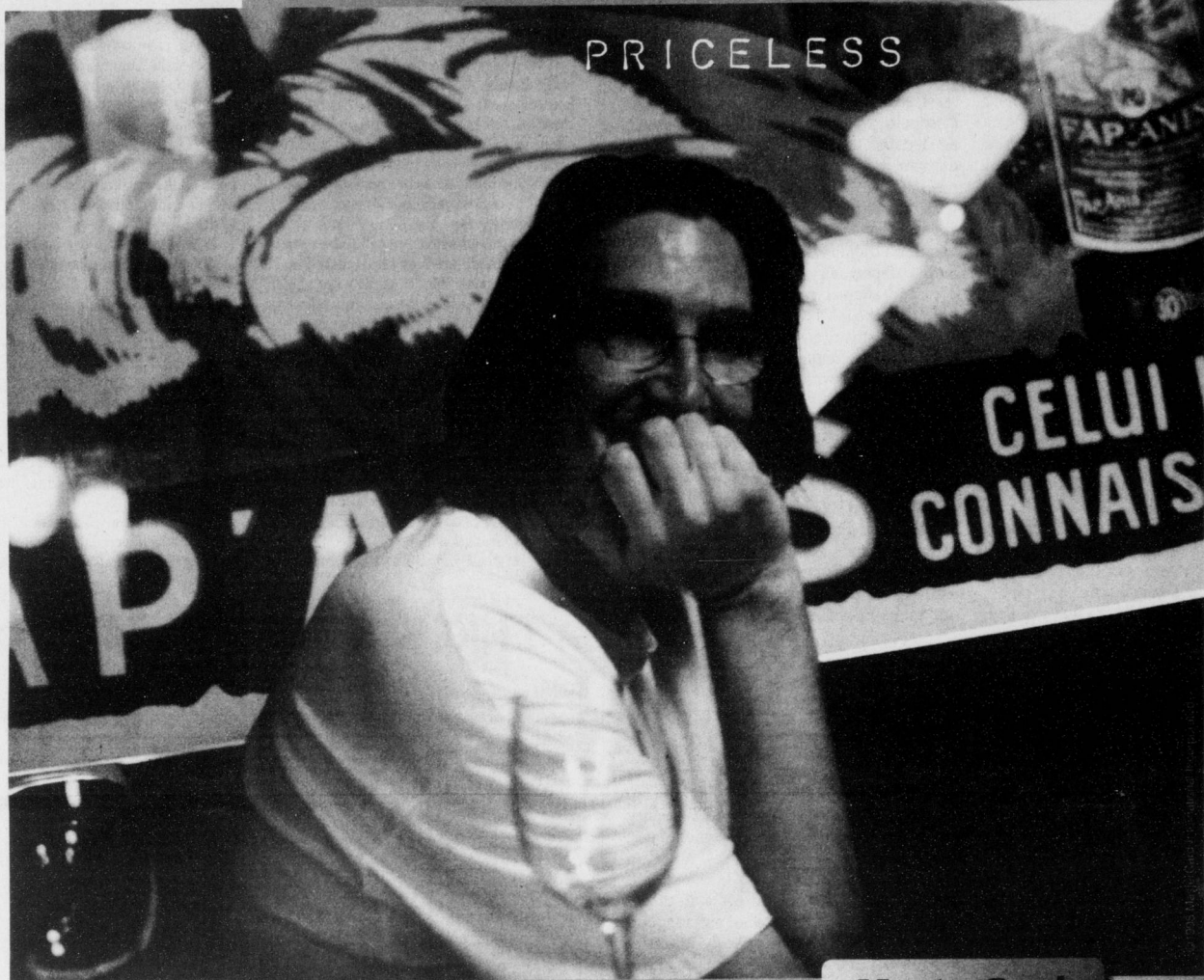
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