

Senkiw

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in a star player's hands and saying, "win the game."

Owners are sold on what plays coaches can bring to a system, not how the coaches select personnel or motivate players.

The only owner who might have realized this is Dallas' Jones. He went out and got Bill Parcells, a man who will coach, teach and motivate, not install some offense that confuses his own players.

Coaches don't win championships, players do.

Free agency is the one issue that has decimated team ideas. Players are now selling themselves to teams for championship rings. Very rarely do we have the guys who fight their whole career to earn that shot at a ring.

It sure is nice to see Oakland's Tim Brown, a man who turned down other contenders, make it to the big game with the only team he has ever known.

Now teams have a 2-3 year window where they have to buy every player out there to win a ring and then lose them to salary cap constraints.

The team starts all over and players scatter themselves around the league. I have to buy a preseason NFL magazine and spend half the summer studying the depth charts to know what player is playing where.

Guys are moving more than the military, hopping from city to city in hopes of that fat contract and a chance for a ring.

I'm not saying the NFL is terrible because I believe it is the best pro sport on the market right now. But, like every other sport, it is not perfect.

I just hope that we don't see the problems the NBA and MLB have run into where owners and players square off.

The Super Bowl should be great because football fans have a team to root for or pull against. Watching this year's game, along with the last three, makes it hard for me to wake up the next morning really caring who won.

Senkiw is a third-year print journalism student.



Brown

Serena slams Venus in Open

BY PHIL BROWN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MELBOURNE, Australia — Serena Williams has said all along that she's the perfectionist in the family. Now she has a perfect set of trophies from the last four major tennis tournaments.

Williams completed her "Serena Slam" by defeating older sister Venus at the Australian Open, 7-6 (4), 3-6, 6-4 Saturday. Serena has beaten Venus in the final of the last four majors.

The match was filled with mistakes, and Serena committed 54 errors, compared with 51 for Venus. Serena slammed down her racket after a few of the more serious miscues, and she berated a line judge even after winning a key point.

"I think she just about had me," Serena said of her sister. "I just wanted to win so bad."

Serena missed last year's Australian Open with an injury, ruining her shot at becoming the first player since Steffi Graf in 1988 to win a true Grand Slam — all four majors in the same calendar year.

But after winning last year's French Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open titles, and now the Australian, Serena joins an elite group of players who have held all four major titles at once; the others are Maureen Connolly, Margaret Court, Martina Navratilova and Graf. Connolly and Court also won all four in the same year.

"I just can't believe I can now be compared to these women," Serena said. "They're such greats, and I don't know if I'll accomplish everything they have. But to even be in the category of winning four in a row is, for me, really amazing, it's something I've always dreamed of and wanted to do."

"I'm just going to keep fighting, keep working hard and keep smiling."

Venus, who now trails her sister 5-4 in major titles won, said she's more motivated than ever.

"I don't want to be the player that won four Grand Slams, whether she wins five or 15," said Venus, who has won Wimbledon and the U.S. Open twice each. "When you look at the great players who have won 20 and all those kinds of numbers, I still have a long way to go — and not much time."

Agassi breezes through final of Australian Open

Andre Agassi just keeps getting better with age.

The 32-year-old Agassi over-

whelmed Rainer Schuettler right from the start and breezed to his fourth Australian Open title 6-2, 6-2, 6-1 Sunday, becoming the oldest man to win a Grand Slam singles crown in 31 years.

"There's not a single day that's guaranteed or promised to us, and certainly days like this are very rare," Agassi said.

Agassi won his eighth Grand Slam championship. And the victory might also have been enough to lure his wife, Steffi Graf, out of retirement.

Agassi had said earlier that if he won this tournament, Graf would be his partner for mixed doubles in the French Open.

After the final point, Agassi gave a quick wink into the stands at Graf, who won 22 Grand Slam singles titles before she stopped playing three years ago.

"There's one positive thing: I think everyone's looking forward to the French Open," Schuettler said, said drawing laughs from Agassi, Graf and the fans.

"She's not too pleased about that, but hopefully I'll have 50 years with her to be mad at me about more things," Agassi said.

"I don't think anybody appreciates how hard this is going to be for me to get her out there. There is nothing about this she is going to enjoy."

Agassi was the oldest man to win a Grand Slam singles title since Ken Rosewall won the Australian Open in 1972 at 37.

"You never know when it's your last, but I'll never forget being here," Agassi told the crowd at the trophy ceremony.

"I'll never forget playing for you. I'll never forget the love and support here. I feel like I'm half Australian."

Agassi now has won the Australian Open four of the seven times he has entered.

He also had won in 1995, 2000 and 2001, but injured his wrist on the eve of last year's Australian.

"It means the world to win a Grand Slam," Agassi said. "To win eight is beyond my wildest dreams. I've been overwhelmed with winning from the first I experienced it."

"I play the game with urgency when I'm out there. I feel like I can always see what somebody can do. I'm always trying to impose myself. But to absorb this takes some time."



Agassi

Super Bowl

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intermission.

But the Raiders struck the first blow.

On the opening series, Johnson was hit by Regan Upshaw as he threw toward an open McCardell, and Charles Woodson intercepted to give the Raiders the ball at the Tampa Bay 28. But Oakland got only one first down and had to settle for Sebastian Janikowski's 40-yard

field goal to take a 3-0 lead.

The Bucs came right back to tie it on Martin Gramatica's 31-yarder. It was set up by two 23-yard plays, a pass from Johnson to Joe Jurevicius and a sweep by Pittman.

Jackson's first interception for Tampa Bay set up the next score: Gramatica's 43-yard field goal early in the second quarter to give the Bucs a 6-3 lead.

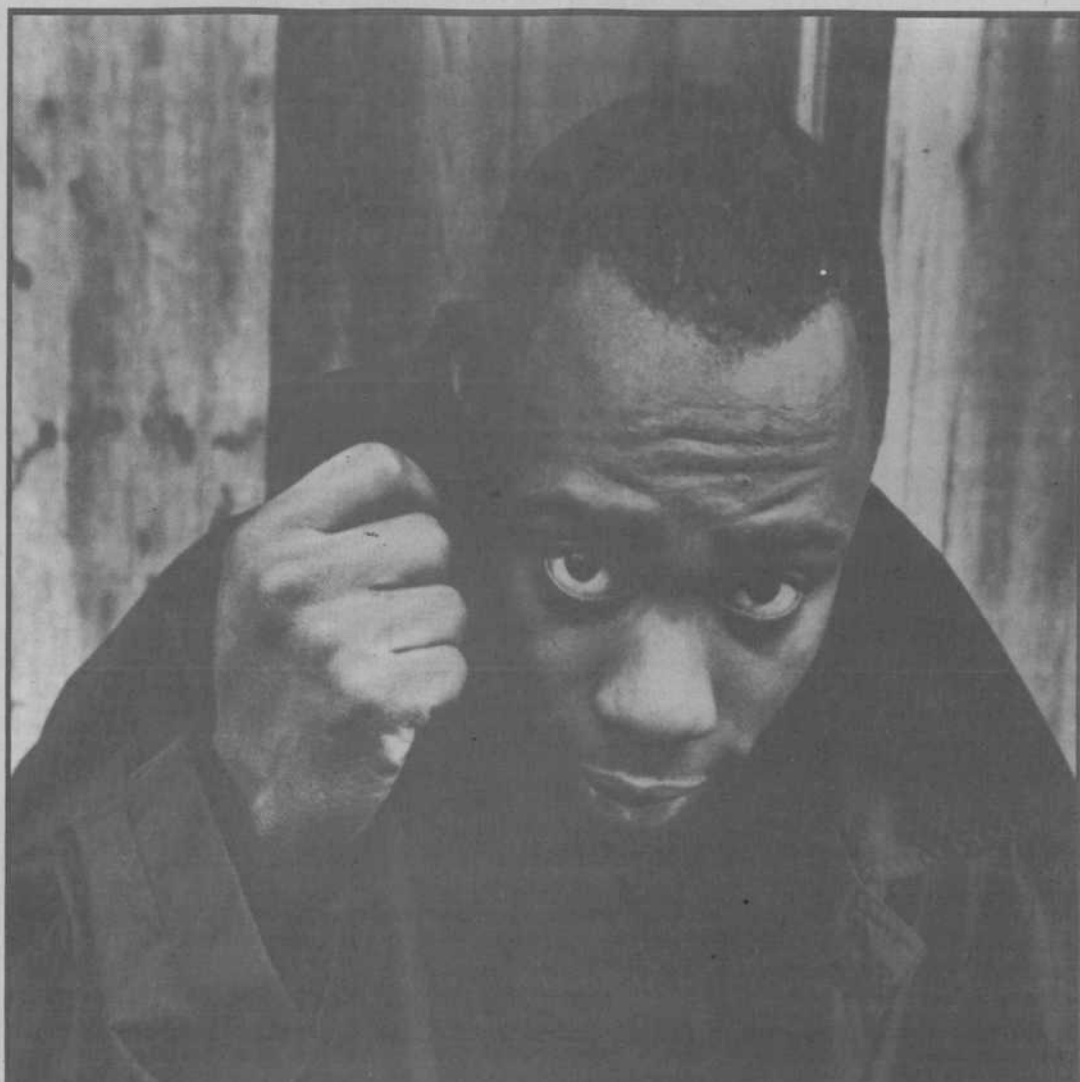
Jackson got another interception on the Raiders' next possession, returning it 23 yards to the Raiders 45. Tampa Bay couldn't move and Tom Tupa

had to punt.

But the Tampa Bay defense held the Raiders to three downs and out, and the Bucs finally broke through to take a 13-3 lead.

First, Karl Williams returned Shane Lechler's punt 25 yards to The Oakland 27, then Pittman had runs of 6 and 21 yards to give Tampa Bay a first down at the 2. On the second play, Alstott went in for the game's first TD with 6:24 left in the half.

The Bucs made it 20-3 at halftime on a 77-yard, 10-play drive, capped by a pass to McCardell on first down from the 5.



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Track

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Other top-five finishers for the Gamecock men's team were the Distance Medley Relay team, Fred Townsend in the high jump, Chris Steddum in the pole vault and Tony Almond in the long jump.

In all, South Carolina had 61 top-10 finishes for the day. Next, the Gamecocks compete with half the squad at the East Tennessee State Invitational and the other half at the North Carolina Invitational. Both meets are on Feb. 1.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocksports@hotmail.com

BRIEFLY

Warren to return to basketball practice

USC men's basketball center Marius Petravicius, whose career ended with his knee injury against The Citadel on Jan. 2, underwent surgery to reconstruct his ACL on Saturday. "He did very well, it was an uncomplicated surgery. He will begin rehab immediately (Sunday) and we expect it to be six months to recovery," Dr. Jeff Guy, one of the team's orthopedic surgeons, said.

"With an injury like he had, there was great stability because he was in great shape and he has a really strong leg," USC head coach Dave Odom said. "We are pleased he is recovering and will begin rehab immediately."

In other injury news, Chris Warren is getting better every day, after suffering a high ankle sprain in practice on Jan. 5.

"He has been cleared to increase activity as tolerated," Odom said. "Chris will begin practice with the team on Monday. While we don't expect him back for the game on Wednesday at Tennessee, he will begin practice with the team on a limited basis."



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