

Top Class Entertainment at Brodies Champions of Tennis Tournament



Spectators were treated to some fantastic entertainment on the opening day of the Brodies Champions of Tennis tournament in Stockbridge.

The hair may be greyer and the legs slightly slower, but make no mistake; the former top players have lost none of the skill or the competitive nature which saw them reach the top of their profession.

The tournament opened with a match between Greg Rusedski and former Wimbledon finalist Mark Philippoussis. Rusedski started strongly and was a break up before the Australian fought back and took the first set to a tie break, which he won convincingly.

The second set was all one way traffic with 36 year old Philippoussis storming into a 5-0 lead before Rusedski pulled one back, however this only delayed the inevitable and the set finished 6-1.

After the game, Rusedski said "I'm going to be 40 in September. It's hard to believe, but 40 is the new 30 so they say. I thought I started really well today with the chance to get a double break, then Mark just lifted his game and played really well. Hopefully tomorrow I can lift my game against Carlos (Moya). It's a pretty rough section in this event, Philippoussis is playing well, but it's great to have it here in Edinburgh. It's nice to be back here. I was at Stirling University about six months ago, helping out Jonny O'Mara at the national tennis centre. It's great to see the sun here as

well, you can't beat it. I'll come back on holiday many times if it stays like this."



The next game involved Mikael Pernfors and Wayne Ferreira, and with the scores level at 3-3, Ferreira got the break after hit a winning shot which struck the net-cord before dropping over, leaving Pernfors with no chance. The South African held his serve to go 5-3 up, but Pernfors fought back to take the set to a tie break.

The Swede went 3-1 up with a stunning drop shot, but Ferreira won the next three points to go 4-3 up. Pernfors squared the tie break at 4-4 before Ferreira again won the next three points to win the set.

The second set went with serve until Ferreira broke to take the game to 5-3. The deciding game saw Pernfors take a 30-0 lead, before Ferreira fought back to win the set and the match.

The evening session featured former UK number one Tim Henman against former Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic, in a repeat of the infamous 2001 Wimbledon Semi Final which the Croatian won in five sets after raid delayed play.

The game started as it meant to go on, with Henman challenging the first call, only for Ivanisevic to pick up the ball, imitating 'Hawk Eye' then placing it an inch over the line to the amusement of the crowd. The game went with serve, but when Henman won a point after hitting the net cord, Ivanisevic told him that he would be sorry then proceeded to serve an incredible eight consecutive aces over the next two games.



The break finally came at 4-4 and it was Ivanisevic who won it, to serve for the set, which he eventually won with another

ace.

The second set followed the same pattern as the first, except this time the break fell to Henman who took the set 6-4.

There are no third sets in this tournament, and the winner would be the first to 10 with a two point advantage, similar to a tie break. Henman took the first point then lost the next three, before winning six consecutive points to lead 7-3. Ivanisevic made it 7-4 but Henman proved too strong and won 10-5 to take the honours.

Although the game was played in the best of spirits, a sweat covered Ivanisevic insisted that he was upset at getting beat. He said: "I never like to lose, I came here to win. It's fun but competitive and you want to win. He played OK, but I was sloppy. In the tie break he was very good. It's always nice to play with Tim however as he is one of my favourite players and has a great touch."

A delighted Tim Henman said: "We've played each other a few times but the 2001 match is the one that everyone remembers. We practice together on the tour and irrespective of that result he has always been a good friend and I enjoy his company and this event and the champions tour is fun for us and there is a little bit of the competitive element.

"This is the first year and it's unique and a bespoke stadium and I think it's a great idea and it shows you don't have to be in a stadium or arena as you can take this anywhere so hopefully it's got some longevity."

The final game of the night was a doubles match between Greg Rusedski and Carlos Moya against Mikael Pernfors and Thomas Enqvist. The match had everything, trick shots, head tennis and audience participation when Greg Rusedski invited a female from the crowd to take his place after she had given him some advice. A ball-boy also managed to get involved and twice scored winning points with volleys.

The game was played over one set with the winners first to win eight games, however with the scores level at seven each, a tie break saw the Swedish pair of Pernfors and Enqvist emerge triumphant, winning 7-2.

All the players played with a smile on their face and there was plenty interaction with the crowd during and after the games, as they happily chatted to the spectators, signed autographs and posed for photographs.

The tournament continues on Friday, starting at 2pm with a singles match between Tim Henman and Thomas Enqvist.

Photographs by John Preece