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Wilander holds on to a dream

By Richard Evans

Slobodan Zivojinovic has more than just the talent to amuse but Mats Wilander allowed the big Yugoslav to do little else on the centre court yesterday as he cut him down 6-4, 7-6, 7-5.

While Zivojinovic roared frequently with frustration and clenched his fist whenever he managed to unload a counter-punch, Wilander went silently and surreptitiously about his business, looking faster and sharper with every passing game as he blunted his opponent's power with the precision of his own stroke play.

One break in the ninth game of the first set was sufficient for the second-seeded Swede but it was during the second set that Wilander showed us why he can hold centre stage with the poise and skill of a master performer.

Three times in the sixth game Zivojinovic held break point as he started to attack the Swedish serve with venomous intent, sending his returns screaming inches over the net to test Wilander's volley to the limit. But the champion of France and Australia held on and survived another break point against him two games later to lead the Yugoslav into the tie break —

where temperament counts more than skill.

One fine service return was all Zivojinovic had to offer as mistakes spilled from his racket and Wilander ran away with it by seven points to one. To his credit the big man from Belgrade did not buckle in the third set, despite the immensity of the task confronting him, and dug himself out of numerous perilous situations to stay level until Wilander served out for 6-5.

Then, finally, everything fell apart and a measured forehand pass sealed the fate of a man who remains one of the most colourful and talented players on the tour but whose refusal to compromise with his abundance of riches so often hastens his downfall.

They made, in fact, the perfect contrast; Wilander so neat and economical, dodging and weaving his way through the minefield that Zivojinovic sprayed around him.

But it provided just the sort of test the Swede would have wanted and if he continues to move at this speed and volley as well as he did yesterday behind a perfectly adequate grass court serve, then the dream of that seemingly impossible grand slam may not be so misty after all.