

Mats Wilander, Sweden. Born in Vaxjo on 22nd August 1964.

For Mats Wilander, the golden boy of Swedish tennis, motivation seems to be the problem. It is hardly surprising for, already before his 21st birthday, he has packed more success and excitement into his short career than most mortals can expect to enjoy in a lifetime.

Having emerged during his early teens as the outstanding European junior in all the age groups, Mats caused a sensation in 1982 by following Björn Borg as the French Open champion when he was only 17 years 9 months and 6 days old – the youngest-ever winner of a Grand Slam Championship and the first unseeded victor in Paris since Joseph Asboth of Hungary in 1947. His disarming modesty and shy acknowledgment of all the plaudits revealed a sensitive personality. That he should have avoided the reaction which most players would have suffered after such a prodigious feat was itself remarkable; that he was able to build upon that achievement and lift his year-end ranking from 69 to 7 revealed a depth of character, an awesome maturity, that marked him as a very special character.

The truth of that assessment became clear in 1983 when Mats, despite the disappointment of losing his French title in an emotional final against Yannick Noah, climbed to No. 4 in the world with nine tournament victories – more than any other man achieved that year.

Shortly after those exhilarating victories Mats had won both his singles, against Pat Cash and John Fitzgerald, as Sweden went down 2–3 in the Davis Cup final against the Australians in Melbourne. It was a fitting end to an

extraordinary year. The season itself ended two weeks later at the Masters in New York where Mats went out in the semi-final against John McEnroe, his first loss to the US No. 1 and World Champion in four meetings.

By those exalted standards, 1984 was a poor tournament year for the placid Swede for he won only three events. After successfully defending his titles in Cincinnati and Barcelona he returned to Melbourne and underlined his versatility by winning his third career Grand Slam title. This second win in Australia compensated in some measure for his semi-final loss to Lendl in Paris and for his two losses to Cash, in the second round at Wimbledon and in the last eight at Flushing Meadow.

But these personal disappointments were forgotten in the euphoria of Sweden's remarkable 4–1 Davis Cup triumph against a full strength US team in Stockholm just before Christmas that was initiated by Wilander's 6–1, 6–3, 6–3 defeat of Connors in the opening rubber.

Small wonder, then, that after all this excitement Mats should have begun 1985 in listless fashion, looking emotionally drained and finding it hard to lift himself in run-of-the-mill events. Losses to Greg Holmes in Philadelphia, Mike Leach in Delray, Anders Jarryd in the final of Brussels (only his second loss in seven meetings), and John Sadri in Rotterdam might have unnerved a lesser man. But, working hard again with coach Jan Anders Sjogren, Mats is preparing hard to motivate himself for the season's major events. When the time comes you can bet that the old fire and enthusiasm will be there.