

# STATS TENNIS



*The 208 cm Ivo Karlovic boasts one of the biggest serves in tennis.*

Tennis is truly a numbers game when you consider the impressive records that shape its history.

CHRIS NORTHEY reports

People say that infinitives should not be split. Superlatives, on the other hand, should definitely be broken, especially in this Olympic year. According to the dictionary definition, a superlative is something of the highest possible excellence or achievement. And tennis has lots of them. We only have look back to this year's Australian Open which saw Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal battle it out over five hours and 53 minutes to see ***the longest ever singles match in a Grand Slam final*** – with Djokovic eventually edging ahead of the equally-determined Nadal.

Records, or statistics as they are also called, have been used for centuries to inform sports coaches and athletes about performance as well as providing facts and trivia for quiz enthusiasts all over the world. So whether your interest in these figures, of the numerical kind, is just to impress all your friends over dinner or to match yourself up against the best tennis achievements in the world, sit back and get ready to be amazed by some of the

greatest and not so greatest moments in this ultimate competitive sport.

Faster than a speeding bullet, well almost, is the record for the ***fastest serve***. For the men, this belonged to Ivo Karlovic of Croatia in 2011 during a Davis Cup match against Germany with a speed of 251 km/h, but this feat was just recently outgunned by Australia's own Samuel Groth this May. He let rip a serve measuring 263 km/h at a Challenger tennis tournament in South Korea.

In the women's game, Venus Williams is credited with producing ***the fastest ace*** against Flavia Penneta in 1998 in Zurich which reached 210 km/h.

Another word for fast is quick and this brings us onto the quickest ever tennis match. There have been some whirlwinds over the years, such as Steffi Graf's defeat of Natasha Zvereva in the 1988 French Open Final, which lasted only 32 minutes. But the title for the quickest ever tennis match goes to Susan M Tutt who beat – or should we say whipped – Marion Bandy at the 1969 Wimbledon

Championships in an astonishing 20 minutes.

The opposite of fast is slow and an effect of a slow match brings us onto our next record – ***the longest tennis match ever***. We have already seen that this year's Australian Open men's final was crowned the longest ever Slam Final, but what about the longest singles tennis match in the history

of any tournament or championship? For the women's game, we are back at Melbourne Park on the Hisense Arena where Francesca Schiavone defeated Svetlana Kuznetsova in January 2011 in an enthralling four hour and 44 minute classic. Astonishingly though, this was not the longest match. This was rallied out over six hours and 31 minutes between Vicki Nelson and Jean Hepner in 1984 at a tournament in Richmond, Virginia.



For the men, turning the clock back to 1969 at the Wimbledon Lawn Championships, the hours ticked as Pancho Gonzalez took five hours 12 minutes to beat his opponent, Charlie Pasarell. Even Nadal and Federer's epic 2008 encounter only lasted four hours and 48 minutes. Crossing the English Channel to the orange clay of Roland Garros, though, in 2004, saw two Frenchman, Fabrice Santoro and Arnaud Clément slug it out over six hours and 33 minutes. This marginally beat John McEnroe's 'Duracell moment' against Mats Wilander in the 1982 Davis Cup Final by a mere 11 minutes. But without any shadow of a doubt, the longest ever men's tennis match again took place on the lawns of the All England Club at Wimbledon in 2010 when John Isner was literally the last man standing against Nicolas Mahut after 11 hours and five minutes over three days. The fifth set itself lasted a staggering eight hours and 11 minutes. It is hard to imagine this record ever being beaten. In fact I'd say it's a real tall order, which brings us nicely, or cringingly, on to our next sensational statistic, **the tallest tennis player ever** to play the game.

Nowadays the average height of both male and female tennis players is over 6 foot (182 cm). Both Nadal and Federer are 185 cm with Djokovic standing a little higher, just like in the rankings, at 188 cm. Australia's own Bernard Tomic is 193 cm and then a climb to 198 cm sees us on Sam Querrey's shoulders. South African Kevin Anderson is taller still at 203 cm. up again and John Isner is back in the running after his marathon match at 206 cm. But the award, if we can put it around his neck, for the tallest tennis player ever, goes to Ivo Karlovic, standing at 208 cm. This time, perhaps this is one statistic he will keep.

On the women's side, both Lindsay Davenport and Maria Sharapova are

188 cm, which is two cm taller than Ana Ivanovic. But leading the physical standings are Czech players Eva Hrdinova and Uzbekistan's Akgul Amanmuradova with a height of 190 cm.

And as we have looked at the tallest tennis players, we certainly have to see who holds the impressive title of **the shortest tennis player** considering the game of tennis is predominantly dominated by height.

Small is often associated with courage and strength such as with David and Goliath or in more recent times with Mighty Mouse or even the Mighty Atom. This is also true on a tennis court. In 1953, Maureen Connolly or more affectionately known as 'Little Mo,' was the first female ever to complete the Grand Slam, winning all four majors in the same calendar year. She lifted all of her trophies above her 165 cm frame. And who can forget the dominance and shot making prowess of another record breaker, **the oldest**

**female tennis player to win a professional tournament** at the age of 39 and seven months, Billie Jean King, standing at 166 cm. This was definitely the era of the 'shorties' or the 'inbetweeners' with top-ranking players such as Sue Barker and **the youngest ever female tennis player to win a tournament** at the age of 14 in 1977, a 168 cm Tracy Austin, along with both Chris Evert and Kathy Rinaldi at 171 cm. And in today's women's game, there are some players who are 162 cm tall such as Dominika Cibulkova of Slovakia and Jill Craybas of the USA, but the tennis player accolade for the shortest ever female tennis player goes to Rosemary Casals, another American tennis player in the 1970s standing proud at 158 cm.

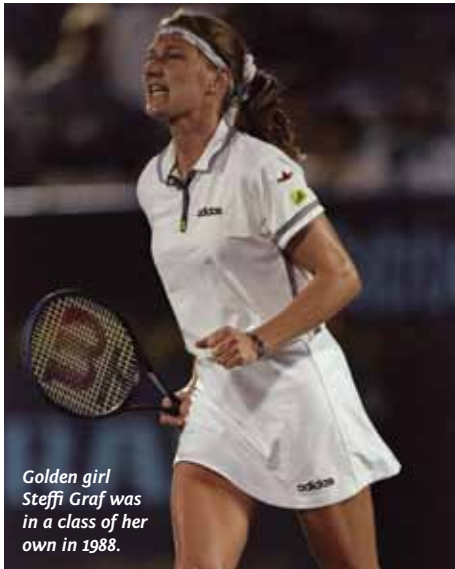
As for the men, there have been a few 'Davids,' although none of them were actually called David. Australia's own Rod Laver and statistical superlative Ken Rosewall who is **the oldest player to win a major tennis title** winning the



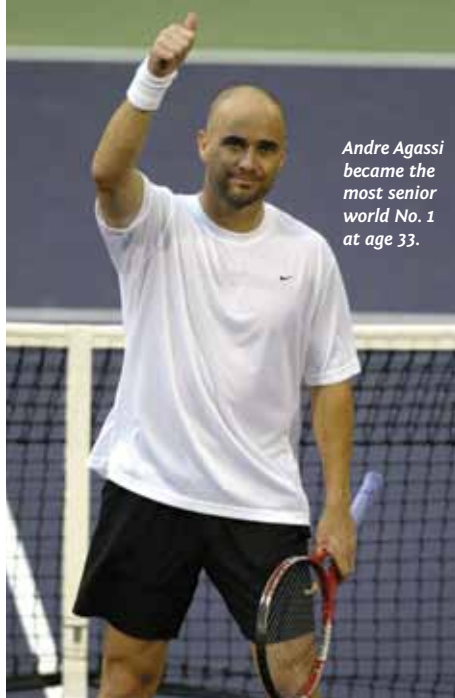
Martina Hingis was just 16 years old when she set the record for youngest female No. 1 in 1997.



The 20-year-old Lleyton Hewitt was the game's youngest-ever world No. 1 man in 2001.



Golden girl Steffi Graf was in a class of her own in 1988.



Andre Agassi became the most senior world No. 1 at age 33.

Australian Open in 1972 at the age of 37, are one inch short of each other at 177 cm and 174 cm, and look what they have achieved. But without question, the mightiest giant slayer on court today is Belgian Oliver Rochus at 168 cm, making him **the shortest tennis player**.

People say age is just a number, but Adelaide's own Lleyton Hewitt, Andre Agassi, Michael Chang and Martina Hingis prove otherwise. The honour of being **the youngest world No. 1 player** falls to Hewitt, affectionately called 'Rusty' when at 20 years and nine months he took the top spot in 2001 and former Swiss miss Martina

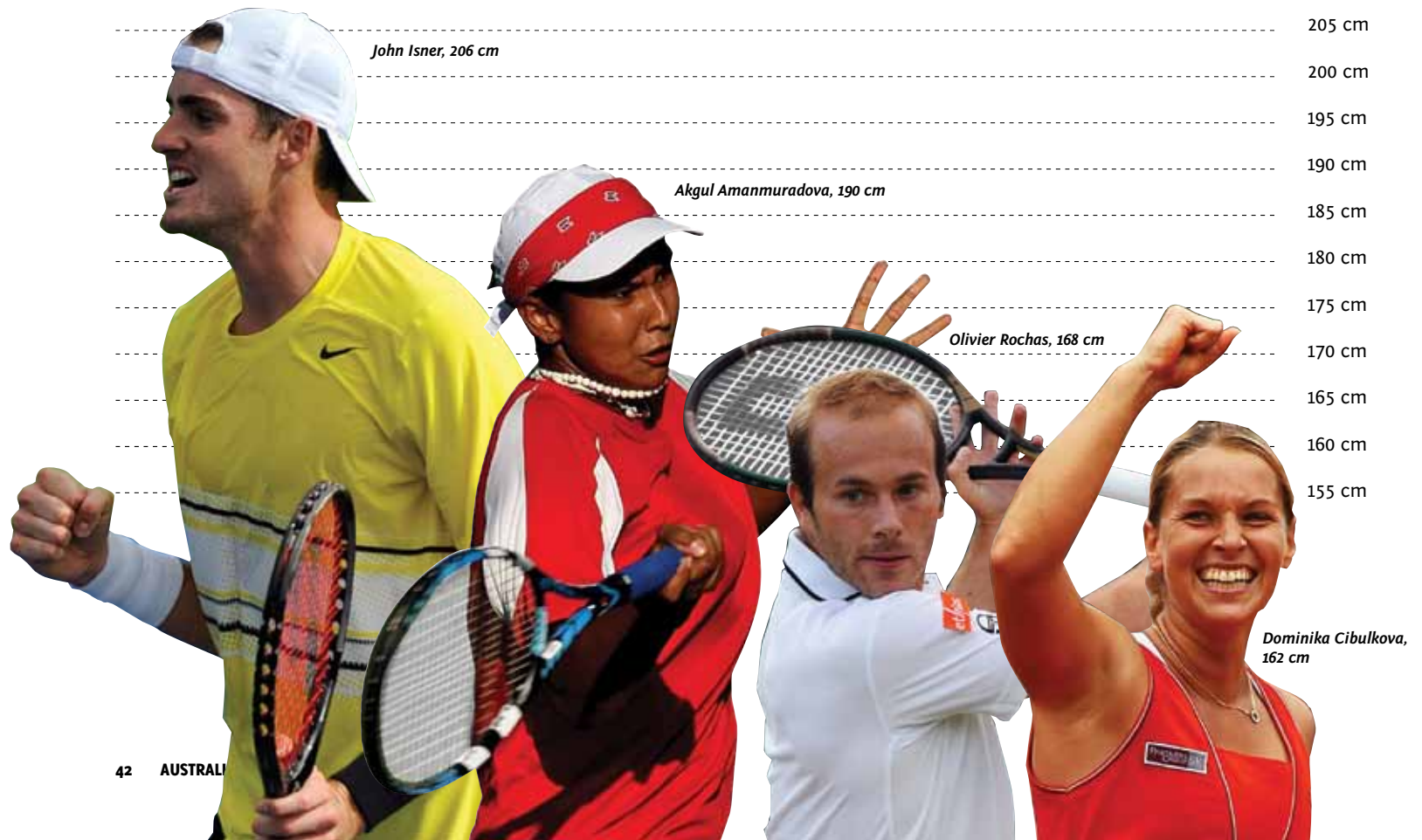
Hingis, was only 16 years old when she became world No. 1 in 1997. Staying forever young, or at least for another Stats Tennis record, Michael Chang is **the youngest ever player to win a Slam** at 17 years and three months old when he won the French Open in 1989. Even Boris Becker's famous Wimbledon win in 1985 comes second, a close one though, with a difference of just four months.

Inevitably the young get older and so onto **the oldest world No. 1 male** and to one of the greatest showmen on a tennis court, Andre Agassi. He was the top player to beat at the age of 33 in 2003. On the women's

side, Chris Evert earns **the oldest world No. 1 female** and when she reigned supreme in 1985 at 30 years and 11 months.

With so many breathtaking records to choose from, tennis has a collection to rival even the most dedicated music fan. That's because for every action, and there are so many in tennis, there is a statistic for it. And to do every one justice, we would probably need a whole magazine to cover each one. But before we bring down the curtain on the titles, honours and statistical awards in this amazing sport, let's have a last rapturous applause for some of the not so well known ones such as **the loudest grunt in tennis**, which goes to 16-year-old Michelle Larcher de Brito whose super-sonic grunt measured 109 decibels at the 2009 French Open; **the most double faults hit in a match**, which goes to Marc Rosset who rocketed down 26 aces in his loss to Michael Joyce at Wimbledon in 1995; **the coldest tennis match** ever played, a title awarded to a mixed doubles match in Minneapolis on February 10 2007 in minus 16 degree temperatures; and, with the approaching 30th Olympic Games, in London, **the only player ever to achieve a calendar year Golden Slam**, goes to Steffi Graf, who won all four Slams and the Olympic Gold in 1988: an achievement still to be equalled.

Now, stats tennis! ■



John Isner, 206 cm

Akgul Amanmuradova, 190 cm

Olivier Rochas, 168 cm

Dominika Cibulkova, 162 cm