

Our prize-winning performers

Most Improved Male Pro: Tim Henman

Probably the easiest way for an unknown player to make headlines is to play well in a major tournament in his home country, and Tim Henman seized that opportunity at Wimbledon by darting all the way to the quarterfinals, the first Englishman to do so in 23 years. Before 1996 Henman never played in an ATP Tour singles semifinal match; in 1996 he played in six. Before last year, his career-high ranking was No. 99; in 1996, he reached No.

25, while posting a 38-21 record on the tour. Henman not only improved his numbers, but beat some of the biggest guns in the game: Mark Philippoussis in Sydney, MaliVai Washington in Nottingham, Yevgeny Kafelnikov at Wimbledon and Todd Martin at the U.S. Open to reach the round of 16, his personal best in that tournament.



FRED MULLANE

Comeback Player of the Year: Meredith McGrath

Meredith McGrath has been a long time coming back. Hip surgery in 1991, tendinitis in 1992, a No. 610 ranking in 1993. For a couple of years she bounced in and out of the top 100, ranking low enough that she was excluded from the Corel WTA Tour's 1996 Media Guide. Then came England. At Birmingham, McGrath won her first

singles title since 1994, and followed that with a semifinal run at Wimbledon, where she beat two seeds and boosted her ranking to a career-high No. 19. She also qualified for the year-end doubles championships with partner Larisa Neiland. A mid-year knee injury halted McGrath's comeback and kept her off the tour for four months. But if she makes another impressive return in 1997, she could be the first player to win this award two years in a row.



STEPHEN SZURLEU

Rolex Rookie of the Year: Anna Kournikova

Anna Kournikova—the latest prodigy from the Nick Bollettieri tennis factory—was one of the latest players to escape the amateur ranks before the WTA Tour's age restrictions kicked in. The result? She's quickly proving that she belongs on the pro tour. In her Grand Slam debut at last year's U.S. Open, the 15-year-old Russian used her powerful two-handed backhand to blast through qualifying and into the round of 16 in the main draw, where she lost to eventual champion Steffi Graf. She followed that up in Zurich with a win over No. 13 Amanda Coetzer, boosting her ranking to No. 58. If both Kournikova, the *TENNIS Magazine*/Rolex Female Rookie of the Year, and Martina Hingis (last year's winner) fulfill the promise they've shown, then we may be seeing not only the future of women's tennis, but also the preview of a big rivalry.



GUS BOWER

Rolex Rookie of the Year: Carlos Moya

If tennis prodigies are born with a racquet in hand, then Spanish prodigies must be born with clay under their feet. Carlos Moya is no exception. Moya compiled a 36-19 match record in 19 clay-court events in 1996, including quarterfinal or better finishes in

nine clay-court tournaments. In Umag, he got his second career win. If there's any sign that this 20-year-old is still a rookie, it's that he sometimes loses his aggressive nature when playing friends. In the Umag final he squandered a 6-0, 4-0 lead to countryman Felix Mantilla before winning in a second-set tie-break. Still, he remained consistent enough to raise his ranking from No. 63 to a current rank of No. 24. ●



RON ANGLE