

S P O R T S

Washington makes statement in loss

*By Lee Brown
Sentinel-Voice*

MaliVai Washington has made a name for himself. Not just for being the nation's best black tennis player, but for being someone who should be taken equally as serious in life.

Intelligent and well-spoken, Washington fought maddening and sporadic rain delays Saturday to make it to the Wimbledon finals against Richard Krajicek — the first time two unseeded men have played in the finals in Wimbledon history. Boris Becker was the only other unseeded player to win when he did it in 1985.

"I'd like to be in an interview where the first question is, 'So, how does it feel to be the first black American to win Wimbledon since Arthur Ashe?'" said Washington before his match against Krajicek.

"If that question comes, I'd welcome it."

Well, it almost came.

Washington, 27, from Ponte Verda Beach, Fla., had never been past the second round at Wimbledon in his six previous tries. This time, though, he made it all

the way to the finals before falling to Krajicek in straight sets, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3.

"It's great when you can come to a tournament and everyone is there, all the best players in the world," Washington said. "And on the last day, you're still standing there."

"This is what you dream about. My dream just about came true."

Washington got to the finals after a wild, marathon, rain-delayed semifinal win over longtime Michigan friend Todd Martin, whom he often trains with. In this match, Washington came back from being down 1-5 in the fifth and final set to defeat Martin 5-7, 6-4, 6-7 (8-6), 6-3, 10-8.

"The whole week, the whole fortnight has been a great experience," Washington said. "It's what you dream about, and my dream almost came true at this tournament." Washington was just six-years-old when Ashe won Wimbledon.

Washington, in his first Grand Slam final, became the first African American to play in the finals at Wimbledon since Arthur Ashe, who died 3 1/2 years ago of AIDS

after receiving a blood transfusion for a heart attack he suffered, won in 1975. And he was rewarded for his performance. In Monday's ATP Tour rankings, Washington improved from No. 20 to No. 12. Richard Krajicek went from No. 13 to No. 8.

"I have a lot of support from the black community in the states and around the world," Washington said after his semifinal win against Martin. "It's great when you can win because you're winning for yourself, and you're winning for those who are pulling for you. It's an honor to be the first black since Arthur to be in the final."

Rain drenched the courts for four days, making it the wettest Wimbledon since 1991.

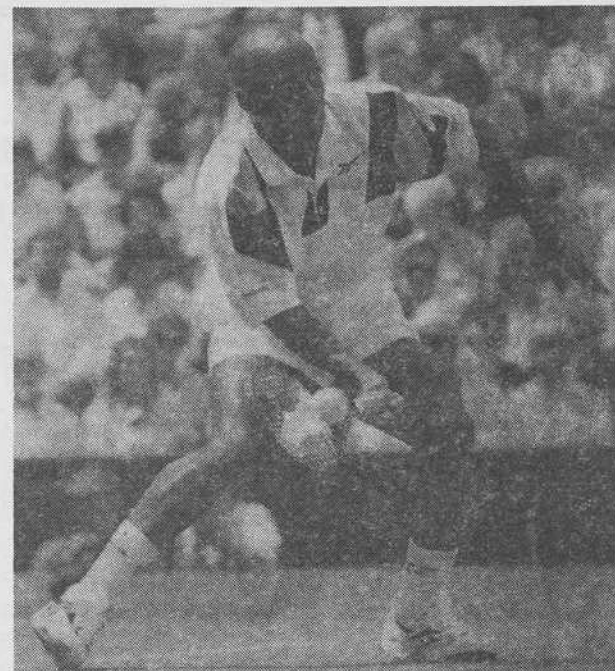
To take the edge off the 110th Wimbledon Championships, a streaker, 23-year-old Melissa Johnson, a student working at the tournament as a catering assistant streaked around Centre Court while photos were being taken before the finals match — the first time it has ever happened in Wimbledon history.

For Washington, and the few blacks that have played the game

over the past two decades, the burden has always been on their shoulders to build on Ashe's success and to lure more blacks to the game. It is a burden Washington has accepted graciously, though he is often wearied of being asked about it.

"I just hope I can spur more young blacks into playing the game," he said.

"Back in 1975 when (Ashe) won Wimbledon, and you see that and it inspires you," Washington said before the finals. "It was a dream of mine just to be able to reach that level. So it feels good to be able to accomplish that, and it would be good to take this a step further."



MaliVai Washington became the first black to make the finals at Wimbledon since Arthur Ashe won at Centre Court in 1975

Ozzie shines in lackluster All-Star Game

*Special to the
Sentinel-Voice*

Ozzie Smith flashed a radiant smile instead of his trademark backflip Tuesday in his 15th and final major league baseball All-Star Game appearance.

Entering the game in the top of the sixth inning, the 41-year-old shortstop did manage to make a couple of sensational plays in the less-than-exciting 67th All-Star Game, played at Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia. The National

League shut out the American League 6-0 in the contest.

Smith, the NL's all-time top vote getter in All-Star balloting with 27,597,904, received one of the longest rouses of applause of the night — second only to the lone Philadelphia player (pitcher Ricky Bottalico) to be named to the team — when the National League team was announced.

Before the game, the fans seemed to follow and applaud Smith's every move, chanting "Ozzie, Ozzie." He put on a show during fielding practice, flipping

the ball into his throwing hand and firing nearly underhand strikes to first base — without looking. To many, that was worth the price of admission, itself.

BASEBALL BRIEFS

Injury Prone — A lot of the luster was taken out of the 67th All-Star Game due to injuries. Top vote getter Ken Griffey Jr. was out with a broken wrist, four-time Cy Young award winner Greg Maddux did not play because of an injured toe, Tony Gwynn was sidelined with

(See All-Stars, Page 13)

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