

# Pete Sampras

American tennis player

**Pete Sampras**, byname of **Peter Sampras**, (born August 12, 1971, Washington, **D.C.**, U.S.), American **tennis** player whose exceptional all-around game enabled him to win 14 **Grand Slam** singles titles, a record among male players until 2009, when it was broken by **Roger Federer**. Sampras during his career won seven **Wimbledon** singles championships (1993–95, 1997–2000), five **U.S. Open** titles (1990, 1993, 1995–96, 2002), and two **Australian Open** championships (1994, 1997), but a win at the **French Open** eluded him. His domination of professional tennis during the 1990s placed him alongside his boyhood idol, **Rod Laver**, as one of the greatest players of all time.

Sampras took up tennis after his family moved to southern **California** in 1978. He immediately showed a talent for the sport, and his parents enlisted Peter Fischer, a pediatrician and amateur tennis player, to coach their son. Fischer, who had never before served as a coach, developed a comfortable relationship with Sampras and successfully guided him to the top ranks of American juniors. When Sampras was 14 years old, player and coach agreed that he should switch from his baseline style of play, which included a two-handed backhand, to a serve-and-volley game. Sampras initially struggled with the new approach, especially the single-handed backhand, but the change was ultimately a success. Sampras entered the professional ranks in 1988 and made steady progress over the next two seasons. At the 1990 U.S. Open he marked his arrival as one of the top tennis players, defeating **Andre Agassi**, another talented young American who would be Sampras's primary rival during much of his career, in the finals. At 19 years of age, Sampras was the tournament's youngest men's singles champion.

Relying on an overpowering serve (clocked at more than 200 km/hr [120 mph]), a ferocious forehand, and exceptional court coverage, Sampras laid claim to the top spot in the Association of Tennis Professionals rankings in 1993 and remained there through 1998. During that time he won 11 major titles and was a member of the

U.S. team that won the 1995 [Davis Cup](#). After his surprising win at the 2002 U.S. Open, Sampras did not play in another tournament and in 2003 officially retired from professional tennis. However, he subsequently competed on the seniors tour. He was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2007.