

# Sam's heart set on Wim

**Margie McDonald**  
Tennis

FOR the past two weeks in Paris the Sam Stosur serve and forehand have been greatly admired.

But for the Australian woman who trains her, Giselle Tirado, it is the Stosur heart that sticks out.

"She has a big heart — an enormous heart," Tirado said.

A former personal trainer to multi-Grand Slam singles winners Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario and Martina Navratilova, Tirado knows her players.

"Martina is a gifted athlete. Every sport she tried (tennis, skiing, ice hockey) she was very good at.

"Sam is just so determined. You can train her hard and she'll never complain.

"I don't know how many hard sessions I've had with her and she's never said a word in protest.

"I've actually had to stop her and say, 'Are you OK?'"

Stosur is more than all right just now, despite her 4-6 7-6 (7-5) 3-6 loss to former US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova in the semi-finals of the French Open.

"I obviously came here with expectations to play well and that won me five matches," Stosur said yesterday.

"I didn't set any goals as far as a round to get to. I just wanted to go out there and play well, and that's what I did.

"I didn't play one bad match. I mean, I'm obviously disappointed with the loss, but very pleased with where I got to."

Stosur's world ranking will rocket from No 32 coming into the French Open, to a projected No 18 when the latest WTA list comes out on Monday.

Her previous best was 27 in January 2007.

This will make her the first Australian woman to be ranked in the top 20 since Alicia Molik in 2005 (No 13 on October 17, 2005).

The next major assignment is Wimbledon.

"I haven't really thought about Wimbledon just yet," Stosur said of the tournament, which gets under way in London on June 22.

"But, yeah, I mean, it obviously gives me a lot of confidence. Obviously a completely different surface.

"I've got to adapt a few little things for the grass, but certainly looking forward to getting in there for another Grand Slam."

"Hopefully I can bring out some of the same kind of tennis



**Trainer:** Giselle Tirado

and find myself in a similar position. That would be great."

The 25-year-old from the Gold Coast normally returns to Tirado's beach training ground at Maroubra, in Sydney's east, after each Wimbledon for "some maintenance work". But the pair are not linking up this time.

Tirado is 22 weeks pregnant with her first child. Her husband Nathan Martin works with Lleyton Hewitt, when he is back in Sydney.

Currently Tirado is also helping Perth's Casey Dellacqua on her comeback from a long-standing left shoulder injury.

"She was sitting on my lounge yesterday, happy for Sam but longing to be back out there herself," Tirado said.

"It reminded me I had Sam in the same situation in January 2008 when Casey had her breakthrough reaching the fourth round of the Australian Open."

Stosur had to withdraw from the 2008 Open in Melbourne as she tried to piece her fitness back together again following the fatigue-inducing Lyme disease and viral meningitis.

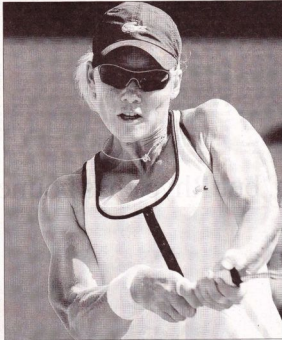
She missed nearly 12 months on the tennis circuit.

"When we started we had to work with the doctors so we didn't stress her body too much," Tirado said.

"We basically started with walking along the beach because that's all she could do."

That progressed to running up and down steps, sand hills, jogging, cycling, boxing and sprint work on an athletics track.

"She's back to full fitness now, obviously, but we've still got to be careful. She can do the intensity but she has to be very particular with her recovery," Tirado said.



**Never say die:** Samantha Stosur in action during her determined performance against Russia

## Safina ensures an all-I

Tennis

DINARA Safina shanked shots, squandered chances, screamed profanities at herself and still won to set up an all-Russian final at the French Open.

The top-ranked Safina beat Dominika Cibulkova of Slovakia 6-3 6-3 in the semi-finals and needs one more win for her first Grand Slam title.

Tonight she'll face seventh-seeded Svetlana Kuznetsova, who beat Australia's Samantha Stosur 6-4 6-7 (5-7) 6-3.

The combustible Safina won despite seven double-faults. Twice in one game, her shots landed short of the net.

"I'm trying to control my emotions," she said. "I'm not playing my best, but still it's not easy to beat me."

Safina was runner-up to Ana Ivanovic last year at Roland Garros, and lost this year's Aus-

tralian Open final to Serena Williams.

Safina has a 7-4 record against Kuznetsova and they split two meetings in finals last month. "I had a very good experience last year and I hope to do better this year," Safina said. "I still have a match to play, and I will give everything I've got."

The all-Russian final will be the second at Roland Garros, after Anastasia Myskina beat Elena Dementieva in 2004.

Like Safina, Kuznetsova was playing a first-time Grand Slam semi-finalist. Coming off a grueling win on Wednesday over Williams, Kuznetsova missed a chance at a straight-sets victory, allowing Stosur to overcome a 5-2 deficit in the tiebreaker. Kuznetsova regrouped and held every service game in the last set.

The 2004 US Open champion will try for her second major title tonight. "It's definitely going to

be stress, definite emotion, definite business," Kuz

Safina's rant criticism because won't in April, she titles, a runner-strong showing; where she has: "Since I became

finals and w she said. "So proof I need that I think I de Her brother, former No 1 Ans Slam champio notorious temp the semi-finals Safina screams herself in English pines-pitied nonver apolo pain audience. Her lingua