

Players Scream, So US Open Officials Hold New Men's Draw  
from [Chicago Tribune](#)  
by **Mark Shapiro**



NEW YORK — Reacting to a wave of player criticism and the threat of a boycott, the U.S. Tennis Association on Thursday remade the men's draw for the U.S. Open.

Two-time champion Stefan Edberg, originally drawn to face Jim Courier, still got a tough first-round foe--Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek.

"That is the ultimate sad irony because those are the two guys, Stefan and Richard, who went in to represent the players' view," said Mark Miles, ATP Tour chief executive officer. "They did it without any view as to whether it helped or hurt them."

The U.S. Tennis Association rejected the players' demand to stay with the ATP rankings, but agreed to remake the draw with the seeds already in place to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

Miles said virtually every player who heard about how the draw was conducted objected because it left open the possibility that the draw could have been rigged to favor certain Americans, notably Michael Chang and Andre Agassi.

[Officials Draw Criticism and Redo Men's Open](#) *(Selena Roberts - The New York Times)*

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by **Selena Roberts**

This was about appearances, about the very perception that a United States Open men's draw was rigged to favor the Americans, altered for good television ratings and crowd-pleasing matchups.

Never had a men's tournament been re-drawn. But yesterday, after players expressed outrage and some even toyed with the idea of a boycott, United States Tennis Association officials drew the men's tournament again, creating new first-round matchups and tournament possibilities, including the potential for a Pete Sampras-Andre Agassi final.



However, the seedings for the top 16 players, which were surprising because they do not follow the men's computer ranking, were not changed. That issue is still burning, and no re-make of the draw is going to put aside the fact that some believe Agassi, who has a computer ranking of eight, was bumped up to sixth to prevent a disaster for CBS television: Agassi and Sampras meeting in a weekday quarterfinal match.

Officials insist television played no role. But they conceded a problem with their draw procedure. On Wednesday, the draw was made before the seedings were announced. Normally, the seedings are announced first, with only the first- and second-seeded players having a set position in the draw: No. 1 is at the top half and No. 2 is at the bottom half. The other seeded positions are drawn out of a hat, followed by the rest of the field.

When the draw was made before the seedings were announced, there were screams of impropriety.

"The perception was that if the tournament committee knew what the draw was before announcing the order of the seeded players, they may have -- may have -- been influenced to place people at a spot they thought was most advantageous to the tournament and not to the integrity of the tournament," said Les Snyder, the tournament director. "The integrity of the tournament is the most important thing."

Tournament officials said they waited to find out about injuries to top players before announcing the seedings. However, there are always injury questions, just as there were with the women's draw, where Mary Pierce withdrew. Yet, the women were seeded according to the computer and drawn in normal fashion.

Therefore, again, there is at least an appearance that the quest for television ratings might have pressured officials to maneuver the seedings and order of the draw.

"Absolutely not at all," Snyder said. "I have not had any correspondence with them."

He did have communication with players since the first draw. Many called to voice their displeasure.

"The word 'boycott' was flying around," said Paul Settles, a player representative from the ATP Tour. "Let me say the tour and the players feel this was the right decision to re-make the draw."

"Still, there is great concern among the players that a grand slam tournament should be seeded by rankings because that is the standard by which they are judged all year. It came as a big shock when this happened. The fact that they weren't going to use the rankings was never communicated."

To have the ranking ignored was enough. But to have a draw followed by the announcement of the seedings only heightened suspicions.

"It is an insult to the players, to the ATP rankings and to the game," Andrei Medvedev said. "Wimbledon has an unusual seeding system, but it's fair. They list the seedings before the draw. The U.S. Open draw was made before they made the seedings. I don't think we can allow that to happen. When it happens once, then the Australian Open will do the same for Australians, the French Open for the French."

Medvedev wasn't the only one with that interpretation. Two of those most upset were believed to be Stefan Edberg and Richard Krajicek. Oddly enough, those two will now meet in the first round. Previously, Edberg was scheduled to play Jim Courier, and fifth-seeded Krajicek was in second-seeded Michael Chang's half of the draw. Chang is No. 3 on the computer. By ranking, Thomas Muster is the No. 2 player in the world, but is seeded third.

For the first time in more than a decade, tournament officials decided to cast off the computer ranking for their own seeding system. Officials said it was to make the seedings a "prediction" of the outcome of the tournament.

Many players don't buy it, with some wondering if Agassi's ascent from a No. 8 ranking to No. 6 at the Open and Chang's bump up to No. 2 isn't part of a plan to give Americans a better opportunity for a showcase.

Yet Agassi, who would have potentially faced Sampras in the semifinals under the first draw, is in the other half of the men's tournament now, setting up a possible final between two of the most popular players in tennis. "As it turned out," Settles said, "it could be the final some were hoping for."

All anyone wanted was for the tournament to be conducted by the luck of the draw. Officials insist there was no fix, but called for the embarrassing re-draw to ease suspicions. "I'm sure we all wish that none of this had happened," Snyder said. "I hope we send across a strong message with the re-draw. The main idea is that we must do what we believe is best for the sport of tennis and what is best for the Open. We wanted to be above any possible thought otherwise."

Still, the issue over the seeding system lingers. "That's a separate issue from what we are doing right here," Snyder said.

Some would argue.

So does all the controversy mean a return to the traditional procedures next year?

"There's no doubt that we learn," Snyder said. "And we will take everything into account as we move forward."