

PARADORN SRICHAPHAN

First Men's Singles Player from Asia in the ATP Top 10

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The Thai superstar became the first Asian-born man to break into the ATP Top 10 when he rose to a career-high No. 9 in May of 2003. His on-court success and hyper-aggressive “grip and rip” game created legions of supporters and helped fan the flames of excitement and interest in tennis in Asia. A right wrist injury effectively ended his career in 2007 and he retired three years later after suffering a horrible motorcycle accident that broke both his hands and severely injured his knee. But his impact on tennis in Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, continues.

Paradorn was born in Khon Kaen, Thailand, and under the tutelage of his father, he turned pro in 1997. While Asian tennis is typically known for producing smaller players who rely on their speed and defense, Paradorn broke the mold with his 6-foot-1 frame and incredibly strong and flexible physique. He never saw a ball he didn't want to crush. He served big, hammered the ball off the forehand side and ripped his one-handed backhand for winners. In stark contrast to his peaceful, humble personality, his game was thoroughly aggressive.

Paradorn is extremely popular in Asia, especially in Thailand. He was Thailand's flag bearer at the opening ceremony of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece.

Paradorn is noted for his politeness on the court. At each match, he performs the wai, the traditional Thai greeting, clasping his hands together and bowing to the four corners of the stadium. The gesture is seen as thanking the fans and it has become his trademark. His success in tennis led to a spike in popularity of the game in Thailand. The Nation newspaper named him “Thai of the Year” in 2002; in 2003, Paradorn was featured on the cover of Time and featured as one of the year's “Asian heroes”