

# Williams sisters have sights on No. 1

by Bill Fleischman  
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NEW YORK -- Following Serena Williams's loss to Lindsay Davenport in the quarterfinals, the dethroned U.S. Open women's champion warned that all-Williams sisters finals in Grand Slam tournaments are inevitable. "Nobody's going to be able to stop it," Serena said.

While there was no all-Williams final at this Open, a Williams was represented. Older sister Venus powered past Davenport on Saturday night, 6-4, 7-5, to gain her first Open title.

Last year, Serena was the Open champion; this year, it's Venus. Get used to their power tennis and their winning smiles that light up stadiums. They still haven't reached their peak. When they are healthy, they will be favored to reach tournament finals, and will win many.

Third-seeded Venus took out top-seeded Martina Hingis in the Open semifinals. Then it was the second-seeded Davenport's turn to be worn down by Venus.

When you dismiss the No. 1 and 2 seeds in the U.S. Open, place the trophy next to your Wimbledon trophy from this summer, you should be acknowledged as the best female player in the world. The Sanex WTA Tour computer still lists Hingis as No. 1, but anyone with common sense knows Venus is the best of 2000.

Not only has Venus won more major tournaments (two) than any other player this year (Hingis is 0 for 2000), she has a 26-match winning streak. If she hadn't been injured earlier in the year, Venus would be acclaimed No. 1.

"I've always felt like the best player," Venus said after beating Davenport.

Well, not always. When the unseeded Venus stunned the tennis world in 1997 by marching to the Open final, she now admits, "I didn't know what I was doing, basically."

Now, the more experienced Venus can change strategy when she gets off to a bad start. Down 4-1 against Davenport in the first set, Venus realized, "I can't feed her like this: I was just giving her the spoon, so I had to change it up."

This is easier said than done. Most top tennis players are programmed to play a certain way. When that way isn't working, they are usually vulnerable.

Not Venus. She broke Davenport back on the way to winning five consecutive games and closing out the set. The rattled Davenport, the 1998 Open champion, double-faulted for 15-40 and then double-clutched again.

Davenport quickly regained her poise to break Venus in the third game of the second set. At 2-2, Venus fought off four break points before delivering an ace to lead, 3-2.

Both players held serve until the fi-

nal game, when Davenport was broken again.

"It was a nice victory," Venus said, "because I feel like I played Lindsay when she was playing some of her best tennis, and I won the match."

After losing her third in a row to Venus and fifth in their last six matches, a disappointed Davenport said, "She obviously covers the court very well. A player like Arantxa (Sanchez-Vicario) just gets it back, where Venus runs it down and hits it hard back. You never know quite what to do."

Venus has Davenport's vote as the No. 1 player.

"She's definitely the No. 1 player right now. She's played like it the last few months," Davenport said.

With their success, Venus and Serena now have the impact in tennis that Tiger Woods has in golf. As always, Venus gave a thoughtful reply to a question about why more African-Americans aren't prominent in tennis.

"We just aren't playing that much," she said. "We like basketball and football. Now we're more visible, so hopefully it should be turning."

Sometimes Venus feels overwhelmed by the responsibility that she and Serena have to attract more people of color to tennis.

"I'm only one person. I'm only 20 years old," Venus said. "I can't tackle a problem of race. I'm doing my best. I'm doing what I can."

The path the Williams sisters have taken to elite status in tennis is remarkable. They've gone from the crime-infested streets of Compton, Calif., to practice courts at their Florida home. Their father, Richard, purposely kept them out of junior tournaments. In football, this would be comparable to an NFL star just practicing and not playing in high school or college.

Venus has no plans to splurge with her \$800,000 winner's check. She does have her eye on a ring at a Sax Fifth Avenue store in Florida.

"They never go on sale," she said. Forget sales: she can afford a couple rings at full price.

Venus won't have time to relax and enjoy her first Open championship. She and Serena, along with Davenport and Monica Seles, form the United States Olympic team that will compete in Australia.

If they bring back an Olympic gold medal, look for Richard Williams to dance again. He was last seen on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court, celebrating the third Grand Slam tournament title in the family. Many more are to come.

An ecstatic Venus Williams holds her championship trophy aloft after defeating Lindsay Davenport in the women's finals match at the U.S. Open in Flushing Meadows, Queens. The final score was 6-4, 7-5.



KRT PHOTO BY HOWARD SIMMONS

# Chastain says she's ready to play some soccer

by Mike Penner  
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Los Angeles Times

SYDNEY, Australia - For Brandi Chastain, American icon in Australia, the Olympic women's soccer tournament represents a welcome change in the conversation.

For the next two weeks, she can discuss playing soccer Down Under, after having spent the previous year talking about what a soccer player dons under.

For the record, for the 15,347th time, it was a sports bra, Chastain reminds. A jog bra. A workout bra. No satin. No lace. Something you're more likely to see in the pages of Runner's World than a Victoria's Secret catalog.

Shortly after winning the 1999 Women's World Cup with her climactic penalty kick and off-with-the-top celebration, Chastain was riding in a cab through New York's Central Park en route to a meeting with her agent.

"In Central Park, people work out in all different varieties of attire," Chastain says. "I saw a woman jogging in her jog bra and so when I got to my agent I said, 'Oh my God, John, you must call the press. There's a woman jogging in Central Park in her jog bra. It must make front page.'"

Chastain laughs at her own joke. "I mean, what's the big deal?" she says. "People have been doing it for a long time."

America, however, reacted as if Chastain had posed nude in a national magazine. Which, in fact, she had, weeks before the World Cup, wearing nothing but her soccer boots while strategically cradling a soccer ball.

That provocative photograph caused barely a ripple. But the shot of Chastain in a moment of unadulterated jubilation, on her knees and waving her jersey above her head in the time-honored soccer tradition, became the U.S. sports photo of 1999, splashed across the covers of news magazines, replayed on television again and again, even spawning national debate over whether Chastain's jersey-tug was proper for public display.

At last year's Junior Miss America pageant, contestants were asked if Chastain had set a negative example for young girls with her goal celebration.

"Ooh," Chastain says, wincing, "that was a tough one."

"And I met one of those girls af-

ter. You know, they have to answer the questions politically correct. I mean, they don't answer the questions how they truly feel. I think they answer the question that could win them the title. Whether that's right or wrong, I'm not here to judge on that. So that was kind of odd."

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was fined \$1,200 and suspended for six months for celebrating a goal by taking off his jersey ... and pulling down his shorts.

"Somebody sent me an e-mail about that and said, 'Brandi, I don't think you need to go this far,'" Chastain says with a laugh. "Don't

"And then I did finally meet her and she didn't know it was me. I was on some Fox interview show or something and we start talking about the soccer and I said, 'How about that question?' And she made a comment and I said, 'That was me.' And she was, like, 'Ooh. That was you?'"

"I said, 'Don't worry, I don't care what your comment was. I know you're answering for the judges.' It was a very loaded question. I think her response was something like, 'I wouldn't have done it. I don't think it's appropriate.' All the right things that she should have said for that time."

Still, Chastain delights in the fact that one of her U.S. national teammates, Tisha Venturini, was one of the pageant judges.

"Tisha was a judge on that, so (the contestant) probably got marked down," Chastain says with a mischievous grin. "So it backfired on her, didn't it?"

The commotion, in large part, was simply the result of mainstream America's unfamiliarity with international soccer. Basketball players don't regularly rip off their shirts after scoring important baskets - Dennis Rodman was the exception - but you virtually can't watch a European or Latin American soccer match without seeing a frenzied goal-scorer ace the shirt as he performs the lambada with the corner flag.

"Which ones haven't done it?" Chastain says. "I think a lot them do it. I think you see a lot of guys pull up their shirts up with political slogans (on undershirts) on their chest."

Or even go further than that. Earlier this year, a male Iranian player

worry, I won't."

Chastain even caught flak from some media critics for conspiring with her sponsor, Nike, to turn her goal celebration into a free advertisement, in front of millions of television viewers, for Nike sports bras.

Well, of course. Chastain and Nike obviously knew that China and the United States would play 120 minutes of scoreless soccer in the World Cup final and the match would go to penalty kicks and U.S. keeper Brianna Scurry would save one and the winning kick would come down to the Americans' fifth and final penalty taker and that player would be Chastain. Of course.

"I think people who are uneducated about the situation still bring it up," Chastain says. "But that has basically gone away."

But talk about being at the right place at the right time with the right left foot.

What if Chastain hadn't been fifth in the penalty shootout lineup?

Suppose she had been fourth and her successful kick had simply set the stage for another teammate to bury the winner.

How different would her life be today?

"You know, I haven't really thought about it," she says. "We all would have shared in the same joy and same spotlight that we did. Maybe it would be a little different. Of course, who knows what I would have done if I had been fourth? Maybe something as silly as I did. I don't know. I don't think you can go back and say, 'What if it had been?' There's no reason to. It's only looking forward from here on out."



by Randy Harvey  
Los Angeles Times  
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SYDNEY, Australia - On Sunday, my first full day in Sydney, I was drawn to the Ariel bookstore in the Rocks section of the city by an item on the weekend entertainment page of the Sydney Morning Herald.

"... Free story-telling sessions should keep the tykes amused for about an hour or so," it read. "Tori Campbell tells the tales, bringing Olympic-themed stories to life with some audience participation. Get there early as seats are limited."

Arriving too early, I browsed until I discovered "The Great Olympic Swindle," a book detailing the International Olympic Committee's corruption scandal stemming from Salt Lake City's bid for the 2002 Winter Games.

It was written by British journalist Andrew Jennings, whose previous book, "The Lords of the Rings," was legitimized by the 1999 scandal, although he had previously lost a libel suit brought by the IOC in a home-court decision in Switzerland. Yet, displaying the resiliency that the IOC admires so much in athletes, he has come back with another book that amuses the lords even less.

When I presented it to the cashier, he glanced at the title and said, "Lies, lies, lies."

"The book?" I said.

"No," he said. "The Olympics." I then went upstairs and sat on the floor on brightly-colored pillows with Emma, Nadia, Rebecca, Justin, several other tykes whose names I didn't catch and assorted parents and grandparents.

We listened spellbound as Ms. Campbell, who reminded me of Glenda, the good witch in "The Wizard of Oz," told stories about the king who created a swimming event in honor of a butterfly that landed on his sullen daughter's nose and made her laugh, the friendly dragon who inspired the torch relay with his fiery breath and the tortoise who won the first gold medal in a race with the hare.

Lies, lies, lies.

## Sports Commentary

# Sometimes, fairy tales have sad endings

I had a much more relaxed time Sunday than some of my colleagues.

While I listened to children's stories and toured the area around the Sydney harbor on a glorious spring-like afternoon, many reporters were at the main press center, a converted livestock exposition hall on the city's outskirts, reporting about drugs and rumors of drugs.

The Chinese announced last week that they had withdrawn 27 athletes and 13 coaches from their Olympic team, an unspecified number because of offenses related to banned performance-enhancing substances. Two Canadian athletes and one Czech have been expelled from their teams after testing positive.

Also, Australian customs officials are investigating an Uzbekistan track and field coach whose luggage contained several vials of human growth hormone when he arrived at the Sydney airport.

The White House recently released a report estimating that as many as 80% of athletes in some Olympic sports are drug cheats and criticized the IOC for its lack of vigilance.

But the IOC's recently approved tests for EPO, a drug that improves endurance, are, despite questions about their effectiveness, clearly making some athletes nervous. Each day brings news of a prominent athlete or athletes withdrawing from the Games because of health or injury problems. Some no doubt are legitimate; some probably are not.

In the 32 years since the IOC began testing for drugs, this is one of the few times that it has had athletes on the run. I have not seen anything like this since 1983 at the Pan American Games in Caracas, Venezuela, where a number of athletes, mostly from the U.S. track and field team, beat a quick retreat to the airport when it was revealed that organizers had imported state-of-the-art drug detection equipment from Germany.

If this news from the drug front were not reason enough for cynicism, another story receiving front-page attention here concerns the IOC's battle with the Australian government over a couple of questionable sports officials who have been barred from entering the country.

IOC President Juan Antonio

Samaranch, who has gone to great lengths to improve his scandal-scared image, was, until he surrendered Monday, defending a Hong Kong basketball official, who allegedly has links with Chinese criminal organizations, and a Uzbekistan boxing official, who has been linked by the FBI to alleged involvement in counterfeiting and cocaine smuggling.

The Wall Street Journal also reports that the Olympic Intelligence Center here is monitoring the activities of about 40 other "undesirables," who were allowed into the country in connection with the Games.

Then there is the scandal that will not go away. Organizers of Stockholm, Sweden's failed bid for the 2004 Summer Olympics - Athens, Greece, won - released dossiers last week that revealed the peccadilloes of IOC members. There are several references to "scoundrels."

The good witch Glenda told us the story of the tortoise and hare and asked if we knew the moral.

"That you shouldn't make fun of people because they're slow," said 6-year-old Nadia.

"OK, that's one," the storyteller said. "Another is that slow and steady wins the race. Just keep going and just keep trying and you might win a gold medal. A lot of athletes do that."

Much later Sunday, I told of my bookstore experience to a colleague. We talked about the Olympics as seen through the jaded eyes of journalists and the Olympics as seen through the innocent eyes of children.

"Which is the real Olympics?" he said.

"Both, I guess," I said. The Olympics reveal men and women at their best as they aspire to the highest levels in human athletic achievement. They also reveal the frailties of men and women as they are overcome by greed and ambition.

But, as the modern Games embark upon another century, we should be encouraged by our persistence. Most of us, I am convinced, keep trying to get it right. Hope remains that some day, like the tortoise, we will prevail.