When I started following the sport of tennis, I saw many singles players and doubles teams reaching finals without dropping a set. But I was equally fascinated by certain matches, because of how scintillating a player’s level is. To me, it did not matter whether a match was completed in straight sets or deciding sets. I liked how these players found their best form.

# **2015 FRENCH OPEN**

Serena Williams (USA) is a baseline player. Her game is built around taking direct control of rallies with her serve, return game, and groundstrokes. Her serve is the greatest in women’s tennis history, because she constantly projects great pace and placement with it. Her serve is also lethal because of her ability to constantly place powerful shots with great accuracy. She possesses a powerful overhead and clever touch at the net. Timea Bacsinszky (SWITZERLAND) is an offensive player. The Swiss possesses a strong backhand and has solid anticipation when she comes into the net.

When Serena faced Bacsinszky in the semifinals, Serena produced a breathtaking recovery of her signature come-from-behind win. In the first set, Bacsinszky broke Serena in the fifth game. This was followed by the same break in the fifth game of the second set. Bacsinszky was four games away from pulling off an upset. But Serena broke in the sixth game to get back on serve. In the seventh game, Serena lost her first service point. But she won four straight service points to get her nose in front for the first time in the match. In the eighth game, Bacsinszky lost her first service point before she won her next two service points. But Serena won three straight return points to break. Then, she efficiently served out the second set in the ninth game. Things could have been difficult for Serena if she broke to grab the second set. If Serena broke to claim the second set, then she would have to serve in the first game of the third set. But after Serena was able to serve out the second set, I think she was more relaxed, because she would get to receive serve at the beginning of the third set. In the first game of the third set, Bacsinszky won her first two service points. But Serena won four straight points to break. In the second game, Serena lost her first two service points before she found a big first serve on the third point. Bacsinszky won the next point to earn two break points. But Serena won four straight service points to a crucial hold. As a result, Serena broke in the third game. In the fourth game, Serena won her first two service points before Bacsinszky won the next point. But Serena won her last two service points. Then, Serena broke in the fifth game to serve for the match in the sixth game. In the sixth game, Serena raced out to triple match point. She missed a drop volley on the first point. But she sealed the match on the second point with a backhand return error from Bacsinszky. When Bacsinszky broke in the fifth games of the first and second sets, it looked like the Swiss would pull off a straight-set stunner. But after Serena broke in the sixth and eighth games of the second set, I think the American did an excellent job to successfully turn the match around in her favor. She kept her stats clean with eight aces, zero double faults, 37 winners, and 30 unforced errors.

# **2018 WTA FINALS**

Karolína Plíšková (CZECH REPUBLIC) has an aggressive style with her serve and groundstrokes. She can generate high first-serve percentages with numerous aces. The power on her groundstrokes let her hit winners from any position on court. Her strongest groundstroke is her forehand because she can hit it with pace and power. Her weaknesses are movement and footwork because she sometimes can’t reach winning shots quick enough. But when Plíšková brought on Rennae Stubbs (AUSTRALIA) and Conchita Martínez (SPAIN) to her coaching team at the end of the 2018 season through the 2019 Australian Open, her movement and footwork were her forces. “It’s nice that Kaja gets different personalities with us. Conchi works a lot on her feet and her fast hands. But I’m transitional with coming into the net and serve.” Stubbs and Martinez were able to get Plíšková to move forward automatically during rallies and take the ball early, instead waiting passively for the next shot.

Caroline Wozniacki (DENMARK) is a defensive baseliner with a counterpunching style of play. Her game revolves around movement, pace, court coverage, footwork, and anticipation. Her strongest weapon is her two-handed backhand because she can use it to turn defense into offense. Her backhand has depth and pace because she can redirect this shot down-the-line. Wozniacki ‘s return game defuses powerful first serves and attacks weak second serves, which let her dominate the court from a defensive position. But her weakest shot is forehand because it had no strength or speed. Her second serve was also weak and is frequently attacked by aggressive returners. This hampered the Dane in her round-robin loss to Plíšková at the WTA Finals. In the first set, Plíšková broke in the third and fifth games. This was followed by a break in the first game of the second set. It started off well for Wozniacki, who had two break points in the second game. But Plíšková dug herself out of a hole to hold. Then, Plíšková grasped the initiative and the errors started to climb for Wozniacki. Ultimately, the Czech saved all 10 break points she faced in the match.

# **2019 US OPEN**

In the second round, Serena faced off against another young American in Caty McNally (USA). The first set went on serve for the first 10 games. Then, McNally broke in the 11th game and successfully served out the first set in the 12th game, after saving triple break point. In the second set, Serena broke in the sixth game. Despite squandering four set points on McNally’s serve in the eighth game, Serena successfully served out the second set in the ninth game. Overall, McNally didn’t have a big letdown in the second set. But she did have a slight let-off to let Serena back into the match. In the third set, Serena broke in the first, third, and seventh games to claim the match.