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# **THE LORD OF THE RINGS**

*The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy [*The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*,and *The Return of the King*] is my favorite movie of all times. Viggo Mortensen, Liv Tyler, and Orlando Bloom were incredible in their roles as Aragorn Elessar, Arwen Undómiel, and Legolas Greenleaf, respectively. Their actions were natural and came from their hearts. Aragorn and Legolas were best friends. But they shared a bond that was more like a loving family of two brothers. Aragorn and his true love, Arwen, sadly got separated. But Legolas stood by Aragorn’s side to help him bravely fight every battle and reunite with Arwen. Arwen knew that Aragorn would emerge as a victor in these battles because their love was filled with strength, determination, and courage. When Arwen gave Aragorn the Evenstar Necklace to symbolize their love, Aragorn saw the honesty in Arwen’s love for him. He felt the same way about her too. Aragorn suffered emotionally when he and Arwen tragically got separated. But Legolas stuck by his side to help him heal through this loss. Knowing that Legolas was his biggest supporter, Aragorn got a boost in his confidence and he came out a victor in his battles. At the end of *The Return of the King*, Aragorn was able to successfully reunite with Arwen. I was so happy to see that Aragorn and Arwen overcame difficult obstacles to reaffirm their love. Knowing their personalities, I think they were the perfect king and queen for the kingdom of Gondor. Since they each had strength, determination, and courage in themselves, I knew that they would make sure to protect the people of Gondor the same way that they did for each other. I hope my readers will not mind if I get all over the place. But I think there was a lot at stake for some of these characters, emotionally and mentally. Throughout the trilogy, Éowyn was in love with Aragorn. At first, she was upset that Aragorn did not return her love. But I think she was good enough to realize the truth at the end. She happily and warmly accepted Aragorn and Arwen’s marriage. Éowyn was able to move forward from this experience in a healthy, positive way. She found a happy ending of her own when she started a relationship with Faramir.

# **2002 WINTER OLYMPICS**

The Winter Olympic Games is a major worldwide multi-sport event held once every four years for sports played on snow and ice. The first Winter Olympic Games were held in 1924 in Chamonix, France. The 2002 Winter Olympics were held in Salt Lake City, Utah. Every time the Winter Olympics air on NBC, figure skating is the sport I enjoy watching. Russia dominated in figure skating for four decades. So, other countries were under pressure to break the Russian winning streak. Elena Berezhnaya (RUSSIA) and Anton Sikharulidze (RUSSIA) had a rivalry with Jamie Salé (CANADA) and David Pelletier (CANADA). The Russians led the head-to-head meetings against the Canadians in every single figure skating competition worldwide. In the long program, Berezhnaya and Sikharulidze were the heavy favorites to win the gold medal when they skated a difficult program. But Sikharulidze made a costly error when he stepped out of a double axel. Even though Salé and Pelletier’s program had no difficulty, their routine was clean, flawless, and perfect. But the judges awarded the long program to Berezhnaya and Sikharulidze, not to Salé and Pelletier. This sparked the biggest controversy in judging. The Canadian and American press took up the cause to get justice for the Canadian pair. NBC also continued to play up the story to advocate for Salé and Pelletier. One of the judges, Marie-Reine Le Gougne (FRANCE) admitted she was under pressure to award the long program to the Russians in exchange for a first-place vote for the French ice dancing team of Marina Anissina (FRANCE) and Gwendal Peizerat (FRANCE). But fortunately, she was suspended along with several other judges and her vote got discarded. Then, Salé and Pelletier were awarded special gold medals in a special ceremony.

# **AMERICAN IDOL – SEASON 6**

Known as a singing competition, *American Idol* was where most vocalists made their breakthrough in their music careers. In a series of steps, the show selected the eventual winner out of tens of thousands of contestants. The contestants are required to be US residents. They also cannot have advanced to stages of the competition in previous seasons and must not have held a current recording or talent representation contract by the semifinal stage. Contestants go through sets of cuts. The first was a brief audition with a few other contestants in front of selectors. Those selected by the judges are sent to Hollywood. Once the contestants make it to Hollywood, the contestants performed individually or in groups in a series of rounds. In the first round, the contestants performed individually. For the next round, the contestants put themselves in small groups and performed a song together. In the final round, the contestants performed solo with a song of their choice. These performances determine who makes into the Top 24. The 24 semifinalists were divided split into two groups of 12 males and 12 females each. The men and women sang separately on consecutive nights. The bottom two in each group were eliminated each week until only six of each were left to form the top 12. Every week, one contestant is eliminated. Then, when it gets to the final two contestants, a winner will be announced. The sixth season was my favorite because all the contestants bonded together beautifully like a true loving family. In the sixth season, the show inaugurated *Idol Gives Back*, their charitable campaign to help underprivileged children worldwide. When the results were announced during the week of *Idol Gives Back*, **EVERY SINGLE** contestant was still in the competition. This was the **ONLY** season where **NO ONE** was eliminated during the week of *Idol Gives Back*. Jordin Sparks took her time to build up her confidence in her vocal performances. She became the youngest winner at the age of 17 **AND** she was **NEVER** in the bottom two **OR** bottom three. In 2010, she recorded her version of the title song from the 1991 Disney animated film, “Beauty and the Beast”. When I heard her version of the song, it was great! She applied her own vocal abilities without changing herself. Even though Sparks has not debuted on tour as much as previous Idol winners, she did an amazing job of balancing her music career with her personal interests. Her philanthropic efforts helped many in need all over the world. She also paved the path for women in healthy, successful weight loss when she lost 100 pounds.

# **AMERICAN IDOL – SEASON 7**

One year after Sparks won the sixth season of *American Idol*, another young teenager made his breakthrough during the seventh season. David Archuleta was only 17 years old when he was a contestant on the show. He crushed the competition with his solid performances. Even though he came up short as the runner-up, he was able to reach the final **WITHOUT** ever appearing in the bottom two or bottom three [Clay Aiken was the first runner-up to achieve this feat in the second season]. Like Sparks, Archuleta also found success after his Idol run. His music career was a solid success, equally along with his charitable efforts worldwide. When he recorded his version of *When You Believe* from the 1996 Disney movie, *The Prince of Egypt*, his range was incredible and the control in his vocals was perfect.

# **AMERICAN IDOL – SEASON 9**

Crystal Bowersox was the **ONLY** clean vocalist in the ninth season. Her talent was pure and natural. Every time she had her acoustic or electric guitar on stage, she portrayed herself as a true artist. She took the judges’ feedback week-in, week-out and became the best performer in the competition. Simon Cowell was in his final season of being a judge on the show. When Bowersox performed her final song, “Up to the Mountain”, he said it was the best performance of the night and outstanding. Even though Bowersox was the runner-up, she was still able to make it to the finals **WITHOUT** ever appearing the bottom two **OR** bottom three.

# **TENNIS CONSISTENCY**

These are examples of consistency. But consistency is also there in tennis. I have always been a fan of the sport. Whether it is from all four Grand Slams [Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon, and US Open] or tournaments on the ATP [Association of Tennis Professionals] and WTA [Women’s Tennis Association] tours. I enjoy watching all types of matches – men’s singles, women’s singles, women’s doubles, and mixed doubles. The ATP and WTA highlight the best matches from all four Grand Slams and other tournaments. But I felt that a player is consistent **ONLY** if they can reach a final **WITHOUT** dropping a set. Whether a player wins or loses in a championship match, they will still be remembered for their run in a tournament. That made me write about the sport. I will either analyze all the matches from a player’s run in a tournament, or I will focus on certain matches from specific rounds. To all my family and friends out there who are tennis fans, you will see umpteen familiar names out here! I hope my readers will not mind if I get all over the place with certain tournaments and focus on umpteen players instead of just one!

# **2010 WIMBLEDON – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

23-time Grand Slam Champion Serena Williams (USA) is a powerful baseline player. She can hit winners from offensive and defensive positions. Her shot placement on both her forehand and backhand wings cover all areas of the court efficiently and effectively. Her powerful, consistent serve sets up great pace and placement. She is also a strong volleyer when she chooses to finish points off at the net. This makes her overhead solid and powerful. She showed exquisite glimpses of this form when she won her fourth Wimbledon title without dropping a set:

1. Michelle Larcher de Brito (PORTUGAL): 6-0 6-4
   1. 15 aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 47 winners
   4. 15 unforced errors
2. Anna Chakvetadze (RUSSIA): 6-0 6-1
   1. Nine aces
   2. Two double faults
   3. 27 winners
   4. 15 unforced errors
3. Dominika Cibulková (SLOVAKIA): 6-0 7-5
   1. 19 aces
   2. Zero double faults
   3. 38 winners
   4. Nine unforced errors
4. Maria Sharapova (RUSSIA): 7-6[11-9] 6-4
   1. 19 aces
   2. Five double faults
   3. 31 winners
   4. 17 unforced errors
5. Na Li (CHINA): 7-5 6-3
   1. 11 aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 21 winners
   4. Six unforced errors
6. Petra Kvitová (CZECH REPUBLIC): 7-6[7-5] 6-2
   1. Seven aces
   2. Three double faults
   3. 19 winners
   4. 14 unforced errors
7. Vera Zvonareva (RUSSIA): 6-3 6-2
   1. Nine aces
   2. Three double faults
   3. 29 winners
   4. 15 unforced errors

In her first-round match against Larcher de Brito, Serena chose to receive serve. In the first game of the first set, Larcher de Brito lost her first two service points before she found two backhand winners. Serena earned a break point with a forehand winner. Larcher de Brito saved the break point with a backhand winner, but Serena won win the next two points to break. In the second game, Serena raced out to triple game point before Larcher de Brito won two return points. Then, Serena held with an ace. She broke Larcher de Brito in the third and fifth games and successfully served out the set in the sixth game. Serena broke Larcher de Brito in the first game of the second set. But this time, Larcher de Brito was able to hold in the third, fifth, and seventh games. In the ninth game, Larcher de Brito lost the first two points on her serve before she was able to win the next two points to tie the score. Serena won the next point to earn her first match point. But Larcher de Brito was able to win the next three points to hold serve. Then, Serena successfully served out the match in the 10th game with her 15th ace.

When Serena faced Chakvetadze, she had another routine win. Serena won the first 11 games before Chakvetadze held in the sixth game of the second set. Then, Serena successfully served out the match in the seventh game. She saved all three break points she faced. Additionally, she had four times the number of aces and twice the number of winners.

In her third-round match against Cibulková, Serena broke in the second, fourth, and sixth games of the first set. In the second set, both players traded service holds for the first 11 games. The 11th game was a **MUST-HOLD** game for Cibulková. Cibulková was serving to force a second-set tiebreak **AND** stay in the match. In the 11th game, Cibulková won her first service point before Serena won the next two points. Cibulková won the next two points to get to game point on her serve. But instead of it being a second-set tiebreak, Serena got to match point with two winners. Then, she forced a backhand error from Cibulková to win the match.

In her fourth-round match against Sharapova, Serena broke in the third game of the first set. Sharapova broke Serena in the fourth game. Then, the rest of the set went on serve into a tiebreak. Serena saved four set points and won the first-set tiebreak on her serve. In the second set, Sharapova and Serena traded service holds for the first two games. Then, Serena broke in the third game. Sharapova held serve in the fifth, seventh, and ninth games. When Serena served for the match in the 10th game, she raced out to triple match point. Sharapova saved the first on Serena’s fifth double fault but could not save the second as she missed a forehand.

In her quarterfinal match against Li, Serena chose to receive serve. In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first 10 games. In the 11th game, Li had triple game point on her serve. But she got pegged back to deuce with two forehand errors and a double fault. Deuce became break point in Serena’s favor after Li hit a second consecutive double fault. Then, she missed a forehand volley to drop serve. From triple game point in the 11th game, Serena won the last six points to earn the key break. This break let her serve for the first set in the 12th game. In the 12th game, Serena missed the first point with a backhand error. But Li missed two backhands and a forehand to give Serena double set point. Then, Serena successfully closed out the set on her serve with a backhand winner. She crushed 13 winners to only five unforced errors and did not face a single break point. In the second set, Li held serve in the first and third games. Then, Serena won four games in a row to serve for the match in the eighth game. Li was able to break. But Serena broke again in the 9th game to win the match.

In her semifinal match against Kvitová, Serena was broken in the fifth game. But she was able to get back on serve in the eighth game. The next four games went on serve into a tiebreak. In the first-set tiebreak, Serena won the first four points before Kvitová won the next three points. Then, Serena won the next two points to give herself three set points. Kvitová saved the first two. But Serena was able to close out the first-set tiebreak on her serve. In the second set, both players traded service holds for the first four games before Serena broke in the fifth game. In the fifth game, Serena won the first point before Kvitová won the next two points. Serena won the next two points to get to game point. Kvitová won the next point to get to deuce. Then, Serena won the next two points to hold serve. Kvitová dropped again in the seventh game to let Serena serve for the match in the eighth game. In the eighth game, Serena raced out to triple match point. Kvitová saved the first two match points. But Serena won the match on a backhand winner to set up a championship match against Zvonareva.

In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first seven games. In the eighth game, Zvonareva lost the first point before she won the next three points to get to two service game points. But instead of breezing through another service hold, Serena pegged Zvonareva to deuce. Then, Serena broke Zvonareva on a backhand lob and forehand pass to earn the critical break. This break let her serve for the first set in the ninth game. In the ninth game, Serena raced out to triple set point before Zvonareva fought back to deuce. Deuce turned into advantage for Serena when she crushed down a big first serve with a forehand volley winner. Then, Zvonareva missed a backhand wide and Serena won the first set. In the second set, Serena broke Zvonareva in the first game. In the second game, Zvonareva won the first point on Serena’s serve. But Serena won the next four points to hold serve. Zvonareva held in the third game. But Serena held in the fourth game, broke in the fifth game, and held in the sixth game again to lead by a set and a double break. In the seventh game, Zvonareva was serving to stay in the match. But she was able to breeze through a love hold to force Serena to serve for the match in the eighth game. Serena successfully served out the match to love in the eighth game. She did not face a single break point in the entire match.

# **2011 US OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

After Serena won her fourth Wimbledon title, she was away from the tour for 11 months. Her ranking dropped to 175. But after she won two titles in Stanford and Toronto, her ranking jumped back up to the top 32 seeds of the WTA rankings at 31. She was seeded 28th for the upcoming US Open after two seeded players withdrew from the tournament. Even though she was not a clear favorite to win the title with her ranking, she still reached the final without dropping a set:

1. Bojana Jovanovski (SERBIA): 6-1 6-1
   1. Four aces
   2. Zero double faults
   3. 22 winners
   4. 10 unforced errors
2. Michaëlla Krajicek (NETHERLANDS): 6-0 6-1
   1. 10 aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 25 winners
   4. 10 unforced errors
3. Victória Azárenka (BELARUS): 6-1 7-6[7-5]
   1. 12 aces
   2. Four double faults
   3. 39 winners
   4. 24 unforced errors
4. Ana Ivanović (SERBIA): 6-3 6-4
   1. Nine aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 16 winners
   4. 14 unforced errors
5. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUSSIA): 7-5 6-1
   1. Six aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 26 winners
   4. 23 unforced errors
6. Caroline Wozniacki (DENMARK): 6-2 6-4
   1. 11 aces
   2. Four double faults
   3. 34 winners
   4. 34 unforced errors

In her semifinal match against Wozniacki, Serena faced a world number one player. In the first set, Serena broke in the fourth game. Wozniacki broke in the seventh game, then Serena broke in the eighth game to win the first set. In the second set, Serena broke in the fourth game and served for the match in the ninth game. Wozniacki broke to get back on serve in the 10th game. But Serena broke in the next game to win the match. This was her first Grand Slam final since 2010 Wimbledon.

Even though Serena lost the championship match to Sam Stosur (AUSTRALIA), she was still all smiles in the trophy ceremony. “It’s been an arduous road. Six months ago, in the hospital, I never thought I would be standing here today. It would not have mattered in the end. Sam played really well.” Serena ended the year ranked 12 with two titles won, 22 wins, and three losses.

# **2012 BANK OF THE WEST CLASSIC – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Serena returned to vintage form in 2012. She won two clay court titles in Charleston and Madrid. This halved her ranking from 12 to six back into the top 10 of the WTA rankings. Serena hired a new coach, Patrick Mouratoglou (FRANCE), before Wimbledon started. In their first tournament together, Serena won her 14th Grand Slam title and fifth Wimbledon title. With her Wimbledon win, she returned to the top five of the WTA rankings at four. Two weeks after winning Wimbledon, Serena returned to Stanford as the defending champion. She successfully defended her title in Stanford without dropping a set:

1. Nicole Gibbs (USA): 6-2 6-1
2. Chanelle Scheepers (SOUTH AFRICA): 6-4 6-0
3. Sorana Cîrstea (ROMANIA): 6-1 6-2
4. Coco Vandeweghe (USA): 7-5 6-3

In the first set, Vandeweghe broke Serena in the third, fifth, and seventh games and held in the eighth game. In the ninth game, Serena lost her first two service points. But she won the next four points to hold. Vandeweghe served for the first set in the 10th game. But instead of winning the first set, she double faulted on break point to let Serena in back on serve. After Serena held in the 11th game, the 12th game was a **MUST-HOLD** game for Vandeweghe. Vandeweghe was serving to stay in the set **AND** force a first set tiebreak. Serena won the first point before Vandeweghe won the next three points. This gave her two game points on serve and she was one point away from forcing a first set tiebreak. But instead of it being a first set tiebreak, Serena won the last four points to win the first set. In the second set, Serena broke in the fourth game and held in the fifth game. Vandeweghe held serve in the sixth and eighth games. When Serena served for the match in the ninth game, she lost the first point. But she won the next four points to win the match.

# **2012 LONDON OLYMPICS – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Serena achieved a Career Golden Slam in winning all four Grand Slam tournaments [Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon, and US Open] with an Olympic gold medal. She beat four former world number one players and won the title without dropping a set:

1. Jelena Janković (SERBIA): 6-3 6-1
   1. Eight aces
   2. Zero double faults
   3. 20 winners
   4. 11 unforced errors
2. Urszula Radwańska (POLAND): 6-2 6-3
   1. Eight aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 26 winners
   4. 16 unforced errors
3. Zvonareva: 6-0 6-1
   1. 12 aces
   2. Zero double faults
   3. 32 winners
   4. Eight unforced errors
4. Wozniacki: 6-0 6-3
   1. Six aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 30 winners
   4. 17 unforced errors
5. Azárenka: 6-1 6-2
   1. 16 aces
   2. Zero double faults
   3. 33 winners
   4. Five unforced errors
6. Sharapova: 6-0 6-1
   1. 10 aces
   2. Two double faults
   3. 24 winners
   4. Seven unforced errors

Serena was in vintage form in her quarterfinal match against Wozniacki. In the first set, Serena broke in the second, fourth, and sixth games to win the first set. In the second set, she and Wozniacki traded service holds for the first three games. Then, Serena broke in the fourth game. Wozniacki held in the sixth and eighth games. When Serena served for the match in the ninth game, Wozniacki won the first point with a crosscourt backhand winner. But Serena successfully closed out the match on her serve her sixth ace, a service winner, and two backhand winners.

# **2013 BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

The Australian Open is the first Grand Slam tournament of the year. The Australian Open series is a group of tune-up tournaments that lead up to the Australian Open. The Brisbane International is the first tournament of the year in the Australian Open series. It is held at the Queensland Tennis Center in Brisbane, which is in the Australian state of Queensland.

Serena first played in Brisbane in 2012. After she won her opener against Jovanovski, she withdrew from the tournament with a left ankle injury. But she went one step further in 2013 and won the title without dropping a set:

1. Varvara Lepchenko (USA): 6-2 6-1
2. Alizé Cornet (FRANCE): 6-2 6-2
3. Sloane Stephens (USA): 6-4 6-3
4. Pavlyuchenkova: 6-2 6-1

In the first set, Serena and Pavlyuchenkova traded service holds for the first four games before Serena won seven games in a row. Pavlyuchenkova held in the fourth game of the second set. But Serena won the last three games to win her first Brisbane International title.

# **2014 BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Serena won the Brisbane International for a second straight year. She may not have played her best. But it was not her worst either. She became the **FIRST** woman to successfully defend her title at the event:

1. Andrea Petkovic (GERMANY): 6-4 6-4
2. Cibulková: 6-3 6-3
3. Sharapova: 6-2 7-6(9-7)
4. Azárenka: 6-4 7-5

Serena chose to receive serve in her opener against Petkovic. Both players traded breaks in the third and fourth games of the first set. Serena broke in the ninth game and successfully served out the set in the 10th game. In the second set, both players traded service holds for the first four games. Then, Serena broke in the fifth game and held in the sixth game. Petkovic held in the seventh and ninth games. Next, Serena successfully served out the match in the 10th game.

In her third-round match against Cibulková, both players traded service holds for the first seven games. Then, Serena broke in the eighth game and successfully served out the set to love in the ninth game. In the second set, Serena broke in the first game and held in the second game. Cibulková held in the third fifth, and seventh games. But Serena broke in the ninth game to win the match.

In her semifinal match against Sharapova, neither player was at their best level. In the first set, Serena was broken in the third game. Then, she won five straight games to win the first set. The second set had six breaks of serve before it went into a tiebreak. Sharapova saved two match points. But Serena showed no signs of nerves as she sealed the deal on her third match point.

Serena chose to receive serve against Azárenka in the championship match. In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first six games. Then, Serena broke in the seventh game. This was the only break of serve for the first set. Serena successfully served out the set to love in the 10th game. In the second set, Serena broke Azárenka in the first game and held in the second game. Azárenka broke in the fourth and sixth games to lead by a break in the second game. But Serena was able to get back on serve when she broke in the seventh game. In the 10th game, Serena lost her first two service points. But she recovered to win the next four points to hold her serve. After Azárenka missed her opportunities on Serena’s first two service points in the 10th game, she dropped serve in the 11th game. This gave Serena the opportunity to serve for the match in the 12th game. In the 12th game, Serena won her first two service points with her 11th ace and a service winner. Azárenka won the next point with a cross-court backhand winner. Then, Serena blasted down two service winners to win the match. Serena’s stats were clean with 11 aces, zero double faults, 30 winners, and 30 errors. She became the **ONLY** woman to win the title two years in a row **WITHOUT** dropping a set both times. With these two Brisbane International titles under her belt, Serena had a streak of 16 sets won and zero sets lost.

# **2014 US OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

In the first half of 2014, Serena struggled at the first three Grand Slams. But after her third-round loss at Wimbledon, she rebounded in spectacular fashion. She won 19 of her next 20 matches with two titles in Stanford and Cincinnati. Then, she won her sixth US Open title without dropping a set:

1. Taylor Townsend (USA): 6-3 6-1
2. Vania King (USA): 6-1 6-0
3. Lepchenko: 6-3 6-3
4. Kaia Kanepi (ESTONIA): 6-3 6-3
5. Flavia Pennetta (ITALY): 6-3 6-2
6. Ekaterina Makarova (RUSSIA): 6-1 6-3
7. Wozniacki: 6-3 6-3

In her quarterfinal match against Pennetta, Serena shook off a slow start. In the first game of the first set, she lost her first two services points before she found two big first serves. Then, Pennetta won the next two points to earn an early break. Pennetta held in the second game and broke Serena in the third game. But instead of winning the first four games against Serena, Serena broke in the fourth game and held in the fifth game. Then, Serena broke Pennetta again in the sixth game to get back on serve. Serena held to love in the seventh game, broke Pennetta for the third straight time in the eighth game and successfully served out the first set in the ninth game. In the second set, both players traded service holds for the first four games. Then, Serena broke to love in the fifth game and held in the sixth game. This was followed by another break in the seventh game and Serena successfully served out the match in the eighth game.

In the championship match against Wozniacki, Serena held in the first game of the first set. Then, she and Wozniacki traded breaks for the next six games. Serena held in the seventh game. Then, Wozniacki held in the eighth game. When Serena served for the first set in the ninth game, she lost the first point. But she was able to win the next four points to successfully close out the first set on her serve. Serena broke Wozniacki in the first game of the second set and held to love in the second game. Wozniacki managed to keep the deficit to a single break when she held in the third, fifth, and seventh games. But Serena broke in the ninth game to win the title.

# **2015 WIMBLEDON – WOMEN’S DOUBLES**

Martina Hingis (SWITZERLAND) and Sania Mirza (INDIA) won titles in Indian Wells, Miami, and Charleston to become co-world number one in doubles. They never won a Grand Slam title. But that changed when they reached their first Grand Slam final without dropping a set:

1. Zarina Diyas (KAZAKHSTAN)/Saisai Zheng (CHINA): 6-2 6-2
2. Francesca Schiavone (ITALY)/Kimiko Date-Krumm (JAPAN): 6-0 6-1
3. Medina Garrigues/Arantxa Parra Santonja (SPAIN): 6-4 6-3
4. Dellacqua/Shvedova: 7-5 6-3
5. Raquel Kops-Jones (USA)/Abigail Spears (USA): 6-1 6-2

Hingis and Mirza’s run set them up with a championship match against Makarova and Vesnina. In the first set, Makarova and Vesnina broke Hingis and Mirza in the first and 11th games before they successfully served out the first set in the 12th game. This was the first set Hingis and Mirza dropped all tournament. But they recovered to win a second-set tiebreak. In the final set, Makarova and Vesnina broke Hingis and Mirza in the fourth game. Then, they held in the fifth and seventh games. Makarova and Vesnina were one game away from winning their third Grand Slam title. But instead of the Russians winning their third Grand Slam title, Hingis and Mirza held in the eighth game, broke in the ninth game, and held in the 10th game. After Hingis and Mirza held in the 10th game, there was a brief pause in the match so that the tournament officials could close the roof on Center Court. When both teams returned to Center Court after the roof was closed, Hingis and Mirza broke Makarova and Vesnina in the 11th game and successfully served out the match to love in the 12th game to win their first Grand Slam title as a team. When Hingis and Mirza were asked about this win in their press conference, Mirza said, “All we said to each other was to make them win the match. Let them win the match, not for us to lose the match.”

# **2015 US OPEN – MEN’S SINGLES + WOMEN’S DOUBLES**

20-time Grand Slam Champion Roger Federer (SWITZERLAND) won the US Open in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. Even though he had not won the title since then, he was able to reach the final without dropping a set:

1. Leonardo Mayer (ARGENTINA): 6-1 6-2 6-2
   1. 12 aces
   2. Five double faults
   3. 29 winners
   4. 13 unforced errors
2. Steve Darcis (BELGIUM): 6-1 6-2 6-1
   1. 11 aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 46 winners
   4. 25 unforced errors
3. Philipp Kohlschreiber: 6-3 6-4 6-4
   1. Five aces
   2. Four double faults
   3. 27 winners
   4. 26 unforced errors
4. John Isner (USA): 7-6[7-0] 7-6[8-6] 7-5
   1. 15 aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 55 winners
   4. 16 unforced errors
5. Richard Gasquet (FRANCE): 6-3 6-3 6-1
   1. 16 aces
   2. Two double faults
   3. 50 winners
   4. 21 unforced errors
6. Stan Wawrinka (SWITZERLAND): 6-4 6-3 6-1
   1. 10 aces
   2. Two double faults
   3. 29 winners
   4. 17 unforced errors

Federer set up a marathon final with 17-time Grand Slam Champion Novak Djokovic (SERBIA). Both players traded service holds in the first two games before Djokovic broke in the third game. Federer broke Djokovic in the fourth game. Then, Djokovic broke Federer in the seventh game. Djokovic held in the eighth game before Federer held in the ninth game. Then, Djokovic successfully served out the first set to love in the 10th game. This was the first set Federer dropped all tournament. In the second set, both players traded service holds for all 11 games. Then, Federer broke in the 12th game to win the second set. Just like the first set, the third set went on serve for the first two games. Djokovic broke in the third game and Federer broke in the fourth game. Federer and Djokovic traded service holds for the next four games before Djokovic broke Federer and successfully served out the third set in the 10th game. In the fourth set, Djokovic broke Federer in the first and seventh games to serve for the match in the eighth game. Federer broke and held in ninth game. But this did not stop Djokovic as he successfully served out the match in the 10th game. Despite the loss, Federer earned praise from Djokovic for his run. “I have tremendous respect for Roger, just an incredible record and everything he has achieved.”

# **2015 WTA FINALS – WOMEN’S DOUBLES**

After they won Wimbledon, Hingis and Mirza won a second Grand Slam title at the US Open. Then, they won three more titles in Guangzhou, Wuhan, and Beijing. After their Beijing win, they secured the top spot at the WTA Finals. To qualify for the WTA Finals, the players compete in WTA tournaments worldwide and the four Grand Slam events. Players earn ranking points on the Race to the WTA Finals. The top eight singles players and top eight doubles teams will qualify at the end of the year for the WTA Finals. The players will participate in a round-robin format in two groups of four. The winners and runners-ups of each group advance to the semifinals.

Hingis and Mirza became the **ONLY** team to win the title without dropping a set:

**ROUND-ROBIN**

1. Kops-Jones/Spears: 6-4 6-2
2. Hlaváčková/Lucie Hradecká (CZECH REPUBLIC): 6-3 6-4
3. Babos/Mladenovic: 6-4 7-5

**SEMIFINALS**

Angel Chan/Latisha Chan: 6-4 6-2

**FINAL**

Garbiñe Muguruza (SPAIN)/Carla Suárez Navarro (SPAIN): 6-0 6-3

In their first round-robin match against Kops-Jones and Spears, Hingis and Mirza chose to receive serve. Hingis and Mirza broke Kops-Jones and Spears in the first game and held in the second game. Both teams traded service holds for the next seven games. Then, Hingis and Mirza successfully served out the first set in the 10th game. Just like the first set, Hingis and Mirza started off the second set in the same fashion. Kops-Jones and Spears held in the third and fifth games of the set. But Hingis and Mirza won four straight games games and successfully served out the match in the eighth game.

In their second round-robin match against Hlaváčková and Hradecká, Hingis and Mirza broke Hlaváčková and Hradecká in the second and sixth games of the first set. Hlaváčková and Hradecká broke Hingis and Mirza in the seventh game and held in the eighth game. Then, Hingis and Mirza successfully served out the first set in the ninth game. Hlaváčková and Hradecká broke Hingis and Mirza in the fourth game of the second set and held in the fifth game. Hingis and Mirza lost the first two points in the sixth game. But they were able to hold serve and broke in the seventh game. Then, they broke in the ninth game and successfully served out the match in the 10th game.

Hingis and Mirza chose to receive serve in their third round-robin match against Babos and Mladenovic. In the first set, both teams traded service holds for the first eight games. Then, Hingis and Mirza broke serve in the ninth game and successfully served out the first set in the 10th game. In the second set, the first 10 games went on serve. Then, Hingis and Mirza broke Babos and Mladenovic in the 11th game to serve for the match in the 12th game. Babos and Mladenovic earned their sole break point to get back on serve to force a second set tiebreak. But Hingis and Mirza won the last three points of the match. They advanced to the semifinals with three perfect wins and zero losses.

In their semifinal match against the Chan sisters, both teams traded service holds for the first two games of the first set. The Chan sisters broke Hingis and Mirza in the third game and held in the fourth game. Hingis and Mirza broke in the sixth game to get back on serve before they won six of the next seven games to lead by a set and a break. The Chan sisters held in the fourth game before Hingis and Mirza broke in the sixth game to serve for the match. Even though the Chan sisters got the break back in the eighth game, Hingis and Mirza broke the Chan sisters again in the ninth game to win the match.

In the final against Muguruza and Suárez Navarro, Hingis and Mirza won all six games in the first set. In the second set, Hingis and Mirza broke in the second game. But Muguruza and Suárez broke in the third game. Then, Hingis and Mirza broke Muguruza and Suárez Navarro in the fourth game and held in the fifth game. Muguruza and Suárez Navarro held serve in the sixth and eighth games. Afterwards, Hingis and Mirza successfully served out the match.

# **2016 AUSTRALIAN OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Serena won the Australian Open in 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2015. But one year later, she was able to reach the final without dropping a set:

1. Camila Giorgi (ITALY): 6-4 7-5
   1. Nines aces
   2. Two double faults
2. Hsieh: 6-1 6-2
   1. Seven aces
   2. Three double faults
3. Daria Kasatkina (RUSSIA): 6-1 6-1
   1. Six aces
   2. Zero double faults
4. Margarita Gasparyan (RUSSIA): 6-2 6-1
   1. Three aces
   2. One double fault
5. Sharapova: 6-4 6-1
   1. 12 aces
   2. Three double faults
6. Aga Radwańska: 6-0 6-4
   1. Eight aces
   2. One double fault

In her first-round match against Giorgi, Serena chose to receive serve. In the first set, both players traded service holds in the first two games. Then, Serena broke in the third game and fifth games. Giorgi broke in the sixth game and held in the seventh game and ninth games. Then, Serena successfully served out the first set in the 10th game. In the second set, both players went on serve for the first 10 games. Then, Serena broke Giorgi in the 11th game and successfully served out the match to love in the 12th game.

In her third-round match, Serena faced Kasatkina. Serena broke Kasatkina in the second game of the first set. Kasatkina held in the fourth game. But Serena won six games to lead by a set and a break. Kasatkina held in the third game of the second set before Serena won the last four games.

In her semifinal match against Aga Radwańska, Serena chose to receive serve. Serena broke Aga Radwańska in the first game of the first set. In the second game, Serena lost her first service point. But she won the next four points to hold. She broke Aga Radwańska in the third and fifth games. Then, she successfully served out the first set to love in the sixth game. In the second set, both players traded service holds for the first two games. Then, Serena broke in the third game. Aga Radwańska held in the fifth game, broke in the sixth game, and held in the seventh game. In the eighth game. Serena won the first two points on serve before Aga Radwańska won the next point with a backhand winner. Then, Serena won the last two points to hold. In the 9th game, Serena broke Aga Radwańska to serve for the match in the 10th game. In the 10th game, Serena successfully served out the match to love with three consecutive aces and a backhand volley winner.

Even though Serena lost to Kerber in a three-set final, she was still all smiles during the trophy ceremony and her press conference. She praised Kerber for her win. “She had an attitude that I think a lot of people can learn from – to always stay positive and never give up”. Serena and Kerber faced each other again in the Wimbledon final six months later. But in that match, Serena successfully avenged her loss to Kerber.

# **2016 BNP PARIBAS OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Serena won the title in Indian Wells in 1999 and 2001. She did not play at the tournament until 2015. In 2015, she reached the semifinals before she withdrew from the tournament. One year later, she reached the final without dropping a set. She was the **ONLY** player to have **NOT** dropped a set in the tournament:

1. Laura Siegemund (GERMANY): 6-2 6-1
2. Yulia Putintseva (KAZAKHSTAN): 7-6[7-2] 6-0
3. Kateryna Bondarenko (UKRAINE): 6-2 6-2
4. Simona Halep (ROMANIA): 6-4 6-3
5. Aga Radwańska: 6-4 7-6[7-1]

In her opener against Siegemund, Serena broke Siegemund in the second and eighth games to win the first set. In the second set, she broke in the fourth and sixth games. Then, Serena successfully served out the match in the seventh game.

In her third-round match against Putintseva, Serena was broken in the third and 11th games of the first set. But she broke in the 10th and 12th games when Putintseva served for the first set twice. In the first set tiebreak, Serena won the first point with a forehand winner before Putintseva won the next point. Then, Serena hit a backhand winner to gain the first minibreak. Putintseva missed two returns to give Serena a double minibreak lead. Serena lost the next point. But she won the last three points on her serve to win the first-set tiebreak. In the second set, Serena broke Putintseva in the first, third, and fifth games. Then, she successfully served out the match to love in the sixth game.

In her semifinal match against Aga Radwańska, Aga Radwańska broke Serena in the first game. Then, Serena broke in the eighth and 10th games to win the first set. In the second set, she held in the first game, broke in the second game, and held in the third game. Aga Radwańska broke in the fifth game. Then, she broke in the 11th game to serve for the second set. But instead of dropping the second set, Serena was able to get back on serve to force a second-set tiebreak. Aga Radwańska earned the first minibreak on the first point. But Serena won seven straight points in the second-set tiebreak to win the match.

Even though Serena lost to Azárenka in straight sets in the finals, she still earned praise from Azárenka. “I wanted to address a personal thank you to Serena. I know how emotional it was for you to be back here. You truly inspire so many people out there. To see the type of commitment you have to the game, it is truly inspiring. Thank you for that, from the bottom of my heart.”

# **2016 ITALIAN OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Serena won three titles in Rome in 2002, 2013, and 2014. When she won the title in 2002 and 2014, she got pushed to three sets in her semifinal matches. But in 2016, she was able to win the title without dropping a set:

1. Friedsam: 6-4 6-3
   1. Seven aces
   2. Two double faults
2. Christina McHale (USA): 7-6[9-7] 6-1
   1. Seven aces
   2. Three double faults
3. Svetlana Kuznetsova (RUSSIA): 6-2 6-0
   1. Five aces
   2. Three double faults
4. Irina-Camelia Begu (ROMANIA): 6-4 6-1
   1. Four aces
   2. Two double faults
5. Madison Keys (USA): 7-6[7-5] 6-3
   1. Four aces
   2. Two double faults

Serena is the **ONLY** woman, who has **CURRENTLY** won this title **WITHOUT** dropping a set. I have **NOT** seen **ANY** other woman accomplish this feat since then. I cannot tell if it has to do with the fact that these younger players have more physical strength and energy to go the distance in three sets. But since the 2016 edition of this tournament, **EVERY** single player **NOT** named Serena got pushed to a deciding third set. The consistency of winning in straight sets was **NOT** there **AT ALL**. Elina Svitolina (UKRAINE) won the title in 2017 and 2018. Then, Karolína Plíšková won it in 2019. Svitolina got pushed to three sets in her third-round matches in 2017 and 2018. It was not any better for Karolína Plíšková in 2019 either, as she got pushed to three sets in her third round and quarterfinal matches.

# **2016 WIMBLEDON – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Kerber’s counterpunching form on grass was superb, especially with her lefty forehand. She played her best tennis to breeze through to her first Wimbledon final without dropping a set:

1. Laura Robson (GREAT BRITAIN): 6-2 6-2
2. Lepchenko: 6-1 6-4
3. Carina Witthöft (GERMANY): 7-6[13-11] 6-1
4. Misaki Doi (JAPAN): 6-3 6-1
5. Halep: 7-5 7-6[7-2]
6. Venus: 6-4 6-4

Kerber’s quarterfinal match against Halep featured umpteen breaks of serve. In the first set, Kerber held to love in the first game. Then, both players traded breaks for the next eight games. Halep held in her lone service game in the 10th game. Next, Kerber held to love in the 11th game. The 12th game was a **MUST-HOLD** game for Halep. Halep was serving to stay in the set **AND** force a first-set tiebreak. Kerber won the first point before Halep won the next two points. Then, Kerber won the last three points to win the first set. In the second set, Kerber and Halep traded service holds for the first five games before they traded breaks for the next three games. Then, Halep held in the 10th game. In the 11th game, Kerber lost her first service point. But she won four of the next five points to hold. The 12th game was another **MUST-HOLD** game for Halep. Halep was serving to force a second-set tiebreak **AND** stay in the match. Halep lost the first point. But she won the next four points to send the second set into a tiebreak. Halep earned the first minibreak on the first point. But Kerber won the next five points to lead by a double minibreak. Halep won the next point. But Kerber won the last two points of the match.

In the semifinals against Venus, Kerber chose to receive serve. In the first set, Kerber broke Venus in the first, third, fifth, and seventh games. But Venus broke in the second, fourth, and eighth games. When Kerber served for the set in the 10th game, she lost the first point. But she won the next three points to get to double set point. Venus saved one set point, but not the second. In the first game of the second set, Venus won her first two service points before she lost four straight points to drop serve. Then, Kerber held to love in the second game. Both players traded service holds for the next seven games. When Kerber served out the match in the 10th game, she lost the first point. But she won the next four points to win the match. This win set her up with an Australian Open Grand Slam final rematch against Serena.

I chose to focus on Serena in this championship match. When Kerber and Serena faced each other in the Australian Open final, Serena won less than 50% of her points at the net and sprayed 46 unforced errors across three sets. But she played **MUCH BETTER** in the Wimbledon final. She was more prepared for Kerber’s game plan and her shot execution was much sharper. In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first 11 games. The 12th game was a **MUST-HOLD** game for Kerber. Kerber was serving to stay in the set **AND** force a first-set tiebreak. When Kerber booked her place in the finals, she was a perfect 12 for 12 on sets won in her previous six matches. But unfortunately, she does **NOT** have that big serve to get out of trouble. This may be hard to believe. But I saw it firsthand myself when Halep broke her six times in the quarterfinals and Venus broke her three times in the semifinals. Instead of it being a first-set tiebreak, Serena broke Kerber in the 12th game to win the first set. The second set went on serve for the first six games. In the seventh game, Serena won the first point before Kerber won the next two points. But Serena was able to come up with a big first serve. Next, Kerber earned her lonebreak point when Serena went wide with a backhand. But instead of it being a break of serve for Kerber, Serena struck two consecutive back-to-back aces and forced a backhand error from Kerber to hold. Just like the 12th game in the first set, the eighth game in the second set was another **MUST-HOLD** game for Kerber. The tennis demons that haunted her at the end of the first set came back in the second set. After she missed her lone break point opportunity in the seventh game, Kerber dropped serve in the eighth game. Now that Serena was in a winning position in the ninth game, she successfully served out the match to love. Compared to her Melbourne stats, her Wimbledon stats were cleaner [13 aces, three double faults, 39 winners, 21 unforced errors, and 16 points won out of 22 trips to the net]. With the seven Wimbledon titles that Serena won in 2002, 2003, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2016, she was undefeated on grass in each of those years. Her perfect record was 49 wins and zero losses. Her 2016 Wimbledon win made her a 22-time Grand Slam champion with Steffi Graf (GERMANY). After this win, the pressure was **FINALLY** off! I was so happy for her, because this 22nd Grand Slam title held her back from achieving success in the first half of her 2016 season. But the minute she successfully served out the match to love in the ninth game of the second set, I saw joy and happiness on her face. This lifted a **HUGE** weight off her shoulders. Her 22nd Grand Slam title helped her become relaxed and calmer. “I learned a valuable lesson, which I thought I learned at 18. But now, I learned that I cannot focus on that. I have to do the best that I can.” Since this milestone win, I think that this helped her out **BIG TIME**, as she was able to play more relaxed tennis, moving forward.

# **2016 ROGERS CUP – MEN’S SINGLES**

The Rogers Cup kicks off for the US Open Series in Canada. The men and women alternate on playing in Montreal and Toronto. In 2016, the women played in Montreal, while the men played in Toronto. After her Wimbledon win, Serena was scheduled to play in Montreal. But before the tournament started, she withdrew from the tournament because of a shoulder injury. At first, I was sad about her withdrawal. But after I watched some of the women’s matches, she was **FAR AWAY** from what was going on in this tournament! **EVERY SINGLE** woman got pushed to three sets in their matches! In Toronto, Djokovic may not have played his best. But it was not his worst, either. He was the **ONLY** player in the singles draw to have **NOT** dropped a set all tournament:

1. Gilles Müller (LUXEMBOURG): 7-5 7-6[7-3]
2. Radek Štěpánek (CZECH REPUBLIC): 6-2 6-4
3. Tomáš Berdych (CZECH REPUBLIC): 7-6[8-6] 6-4
4. Gaël Monfils (FRANCE): 6-3 6-2
5. Kei Nishikori (JAPAN): 6-3 7-5

I decided to focus on the first set of Djokovic’s opening match against Müller. In this match, Djokovic chose to receive serve. In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first 10 games. In the 11th game, Müller lost his first service point before he won the next two points to regain his lead. But Djokovic won three straight points to break Müller. This gave him the decisive break to serve for the first set in the 12th game. Then, Djokovic successfully served out the first set without facing a single break point. In the history of tennis, Djokovic **AND** Serena are the **ONLY** two players to have **SUCCESSFULLY** served out a first set to win it seven games to five **WITHOUT** facing break points. Serena **ALSO** won the first set against Li in her 2010 Wimbledon quarterfinal match in this **SAME EXACT** fashion. But the only difference between these two players was how they each broke serve in the 11th game and successfully served out the set in the 12th game.

In the championship match, Djokovic faced a familiar foe in Nishikori. Nishikori won two of their 11 head-to-head meetings. So, Djokovic knew that this match would be a tough one. “Playing against Kei is never easy. He is an established top-five, top-10 player. He’s one of the quickest on tour.” In the first set, Djokovic and Nishikori traded service holds for the first five games. Then, Djokovic broke Nishikori in the sixth game and held in the seventh game. Nishikori held in the eighth game before Djokovic successfully served out the first set in the ninth game. In the second set, Djokovic broke Nishikori in the third game and held in the fourth game. But Nishikori broke in the sixth game and held in the seventh game. Both players traded service holds for the next three games. Then, Djokovic broke Nishikori in the 11th game and successfully served out the match in the 12th game.

# **2016 US OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

At the 2015 US Open, Serena lost in the semifinals to Roberta Vinci (ITALY) in three sets. She was trying to win all four Grand Slams in the same. But Pam Shriver (USA), a former tennis player and current ESPN Tennis Analyst, pointed out a strong fact about Serena’s 2016 US Open campaign. “She’ll feel so much less pressure than last year because she won Wimbledon and tied Graf.” Before Serena won her 22nd Grand Slam title, Vinci’s upset win over Serena was considered the biggest upset of all times. But **AFTER** Serena’s 2016 Wimbledon win, I have seen **BIGGER** upsets at the Grand Slams to top 10 players **NOT** named Serena! Even though Serena’s bid for a 23rd Grand Slam title ended with a semifinal loss to Karolína Plíšková, she was more relieved to have tied Graf than to have broken Graf’s record. When she announced her withdrawal from the WTA Finals, she was calm and all smiles in her video! Her 2016 season may not have been as strong as her 2015 season. But she was in a better state of mind, emotionally **AND** mentally, **AFTER** winning her 22nd Grand Slam title.

Like her Wimbledon run, Kerber reached her first US Open final without dropping a set:

1. Polona Hercog (SLOVENIA): 6-0 2-0
2. Mirjana Lučić-Baroni (CROATIA): 6-2 7-6[9-7]
3. Cici Bellis (USA): 6-1 6-1
4. Kvitová: 6-3 7-5
5. Vinci: 7-5 6-0
6. Wozniacki: 6-4 6-3

Kerber became the new world number one after she won her second Grand Slam with a three-set win over Karolína Plíšková. She secured the world number one ranking for the rest of the year after Serena withdrew from the WTA Finals. At the WTA Finals, Kerber advanced to the championship match to face Cibulková. But instead of winning another title, Cibulková beat Kerber in straight sets. This was the biggest title of Cibulková’s career. After this match, I could tell that the tide was about to take a drastic turn. Serena first dealt with lots of pressure when she was still stuck on 21 Grand Slam titles. But once Serena tied Graf, the pressure for her was completely off. Once Kerber lost to Cibulková though, it was her turn to deal with the pressure and expectations that Serena first struggled with. This led to her abysmal 2017 season.

# **2017 AUSTRALIAN OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

In 2017, Kerber was expected to show the same form that helped her win two Grand Slams and an Olympic silver medal in 2016. When she came into the 2017 Australian Open, she was the world number one, top seed, and defending champion. She managed to make it to the fourth-round once again. But she got pushed to three sets in her first two matches. She won her third-round match in straight sets against a dangerous lefty and big Serena-like server in Karolína Plíšková’s twin sister, Kristýna Plíšková (CZECH REPUBLIC). But her title defense ended in the fourth round with a straight-set loss to Vandeweghe.

When Serena came into the 2017 Australian Open, many people felt that that she was under pressure to break Graf’s record. Her 2016 US Open semifinal loss to Karolína Plíšková was described as a shocking loss. But I believe that loss would be more shocking if she were **STILL** stuck on 21 Grand Slam titles and **NEVER** tied Graf. Even though she only played eight tournaments and won two titles [Rome and Wimbledon], she still ended 2016 at number two in the world with two titles won, 38 wins, six losses, and a winning percentile range of 84%. After Serena tied Graf at Wimbledon in 2016, I saw her 2017 Australian Open in a unique way. She was **MORE** confident [she had the elusive 22nd Grand Slam title **UNDER** her belt] and under **LESS** pressure [she was only defending finalist points as the number two seed]. She won the title without dropping a set:

1. Belinda Bencic (SWITZERLAND): 6-4 6-3
2. Šafářová: 6-3 6-4
3. Gibbs: 6-1 6-3
4. Strýcová: 7-5 6-4
5. Jo Konta (GREAT BRITAIN): 6-2 6-3
6. Lučić-Baroni: 6-2 6-1
7. Venus: 6-4 6-4

In her fourth-round match against Strýcová, both players traded breaks for the first four games, then again in the seventh and eighth games. Serena and Strýcová traded service holds in the ninth and 10th games. In the 11th game, Serena lost her first service point. But she won the next four points to hold. The next 12th game was a **MUST-HOLD** game for Strýcová. Strýcová was serving to force a first-set tiebreak **AND** stay in the set. In the 12th game, Strýcová was down triple set point. But she was able to fight back to deuce. Then, Serena won the next two points to win the first set. In the second set, both players traded service holds for the first two games before Serena broke in the fourth game. In the ninth game, Serena won the first point before Strýcová won the next three points to earn two break points. Serena saved the first one. But Strýcová broke on the second one to get back on serve. In the 10th game, Strýcová lost her first service point before she won the next two points to reestablish her lead. Then Serena won the last three points to win the match.

Serena’s toughest match was in the quarterfinals against Konta. Konta was predicted to stun Serena in three sets. But Konta is someone **VENUS** has faced before. I think Venus gave some really good tips to Serena on how to win this match in two sets. Serena won her quarterfinal match against Konta in straight sets to advance to the semifinals. Lučić-Baroni upset Karolína Plíšková in the quarterfinals.

Karolína Plíšková was Serena’s projected semifinal opponent. But thanks to this upset win, Serena’s path to a 23rd Grand Slam title smoother. In her semifinal match against Lučić-Baroni, Serena chose to receive serve. In the first set, Lučić-Baroni and Serena traded service holds in the first two games before Serena won four games in a row. Lučić-Baroni held in the seventh game. Then, Serena successfully served out the first set to love in eighth game. In the second set, both players traded service holds for the first two games. Then, Serena broke in the third and fifth games to lead by a set and a double break. In the seventh game, Serena won the first point on Lučić-Baroni’s serve before Lučić-Baroni won the next two points to regain her lead. But Serena won the last three points to win the match. She was able to keep a clean sheet of stats in this match – 14 winners, 10 unforced errors, and zero break points faced.

Serena’s win over Lučić-Baroni set up a marathon final with her sister, Venus. Just like her semifinal match against Lučić-Baroni, Serena also chose to receive serve against Venus in the championship match. In the first set, there were four consecutive breaks of serve before Venus held in the fifth game and Serena held in the sixth game. Then, Serena broke Venus in the seventh game and held in the eighth game. Venus held in the ninth game and Serena successfully served out the set to love in the 10th game. In the first set, neither Venus nor Serena got off to good starts. But Serena was the one, who was able to get back on track faster. Her first-set stats were seven aces, four double faults, 16 winners, and 14 unforced errors. In the second set, she cleaned up her game with three aces, one double fault, 11 winners, and nine unforced errors. Venus and Serena traded service holds for the first six games before Serena broke in the seventh game and held to love in the eighth game. Venus held in the ninth game and Serena successfully served out the match in the 10th game. Serena became the oldest woman to win a Grand Slam title, won two Grand Slam titles seven times [Australian Open and Wimbledon], and regained the world number one ranking from Kerber.

Three months later, Serena and her hubby, Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian, announced that she was 20 weeks pregnant with their daughter, Alexis Olympia Ohanian Jr. I could not believe that she won her 23rd Grand Slam title **WITHOUT** dropping a set **WHILE** she was eight weeks pregnant! She admitted that she was unsure if she wanted to play due to the health risks. But fortunately, she was able to modify her normal playing style. When she revealed her pregnancy to Mouratoglou, she told him that she wanted him to wait for her so she could make her comeback on the tour. Mouratoglou said, “She said to me she didn’t want to lose her touch. Of course, she went slow, but she wanted to hit the ball.” Serena said, “When I come back to tennis, it’ll be better if I’ve kept as fit as possible all the way through the pregnancy rather than having to lose a lot of weight afterwards in order to get fit again.” Serena hit the practice courts **AND** training gym **EVERY SINGLE** day throughout her entire pregnancy. She gave birth to her daughter on September 1st. Her daughter was born 100% healthy at six pounds and 14 ounces. Six months later, she made her comeback on the WTA tour. She may not be ranked number one in the world. But even at her current age of 39 years old, she is still going strong in the top 32 of the WTA rankings with some solid YTD stats – 843 wins, 146 losses, and a winning percentile range of 83%.

# **2017 FRENCH OPEN – MIXED DOUBLES**

Even though I was born and raised in the US, Canada has a special place in my heart. The month and day that I was born on [July 1st, 1992] is a Canadian national holiday called Canada Day. So, I support Canadian athletes as much as I can. Since my family is also from India, this was the perfect edition of the tournament to write about. Gaby Dabrowski (CANADA) started a partnership with Rohan Bopanna (INDIA). Neither one of them won a Grand Slam in their careers. But they played the cleanest tennis I had seen. They were the **ONLY** team in the **ENTIRE** doubles draws to have **NOT** dropped a set all tournament:

1. Jessica Moore (AUSTRALIA)/Matt Reid (AUSTRALIA): 6-0 6-1
   1. Five aces
   2. One double fault
2. Chloé Paquet (FRANCE)/Paire: 6-3 6-2
   1. Two aces
   2. Zero double faults
3. Mirza/Ivan Dodig (CROATIA): 6-3 6-4
   1. Six aces
   2. Two double faults
4. Hlaváčková/Roger-Vasselin: 7-5 6-3
   1. Five aces
   2. One double fault

Dabrowski and Bopanna faced Robert Farah (COLOMBIA) and Anna-Lena Grönefeld (GERMANY) in the championship match. In the first set, Farah and Grönefeld broke in the first and seventh games. Then, the Colombian-German duo successfully served out the first set in the eighth game. This was the first set Dabrowski and Bopanna dropped all tournament. In the second set, Farah and Grönefeld broke in the third game. But, then Dabrowski and Bopanna broke in the fourth, sixth, and eighth games to win the second set. In the super tiebreak, both teams exchanged minibreaks. But Dabrowski and Bopanna won the title after Farah and Grönefeld double faulted on championship point. With this win, Dabrowski became the first Canadian to win a Grand Slam title.

# **2017 BB&T ATLANTA OPEN – MEN’S SINGLES**

Isner has an extremely powerful, consistent serve. The number of aces he serves in a match is almost always in double digits. This helped him win the title in Atlanta without dropping a set:

1. Vasek Pospisil (CANADA): 6-3 6-4
   1. Ten aces
   2. One double fault
2. Lukáš Lacko (SLOVAKIA): 7-5 6-4
   1. 13 aces
   2. Zero double faults
3. Müller: 6-4 6-2
   1. 15 aces
   2. Five double faults
4. Ryan Harrison (USA): 7-6[8-6] 7-6[9-7]
   1. 23 aces
   2. One double fault

In his quarterfinal match against Lacko, Isner chose to receive serve. In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first ten games. Then, Isner broke Lacko to love in the 11th game. In the 12th game, Isner won his first two service points before Lacko won the next point with a winner. Then, Isner won his last two service points. In the second set, the first eight games went on serve. In the ninth game, Lacko won his first two service points. But he lost four straight points to get broken and let Isner serve for the match in the 10th game. In the 10th game, Isner successfully served out the match the same way as he did in the 12th game of the first set.

# **2018 AUSTRALIAN OPEN – MEN’S SINGLES + MIXED DOUBLES**

Federer won the title in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2017, and 2018. In 2018, he was the **ONLY** player in the singles draw to have **NOT** dropped a set all tournament:

1. Aljaž Bedene (SLOVENIA): 6-3 6-4 6-3
   1. 11 aces
   2. Three double faults
   3. 41 winners
   4. 32 unforced errors
2. Jan-Lennard Struff (GERMANY): 6-4 6-4 7-6[7-4]
   1. 15 aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 36 winners
   4. 22 unforced errors
3. Gasquet: 6-2 7-5 6-4
   1. 10 aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 42 winners
   4. 30 unforced errors
4. Márton Fucsovics (HUNGARY): 6-4 7-6[7-3] 6-2
   1. Six aces
   2. Two double faults
   3. 34 winners
   4. 28 unforced errors
5. Berdych: 7-6[7-1] 6-3 6-4
   1. 13 aces
   2. Five double faults
   3. 61 winners
   4. 30 unforced errors
6. Hyeon Chung (SOUTH KOREA): 6-1 5-2
   1. Nine aces
   2. One double fault
   3. 24 winners
   4. 15 unforced errors

Federer and his opponent, Marin Čilić (CROATIA), showcased a five-setter, three-hour marathon final on Rod Laver Arena. In the first set, Federer broke Čilić in the first and third games. Then, Čilić held in the fifth and seventh games before Federer successfully served out the first set in the eighth game. In the second set, both players traded service holds for all 12 games to force a tiebreak. Čilić won the second set with a minibreak. In the third set, both players traded service holds for the first five games before Federer broke in the sixth game and held in the seventh game. Čilić held in the eighth game before Federer successfully served out the set to love in the ninth game. In the first game of the fourth set, Federer broke Čilić in the first game and held in the second game. But Čilić was able to hold in the third and fifth games. Federer was broken in the sixth game and Čilić held in the seventh game. Then, Čilić broke Federer in the eighth game and successfully served out the set to love in the ninth game. The second and fourth sets were the first two sets Federer dropped all tournament. In the fifth set, Federer regrouped and broke Čilić in the second game. Čilić only held once in the fourth game. But his brave fight earned the praise from Federer. With his Autralian Open run, Čilić rose to number three in the world. Federer said, “He’s very professional. He is always very much the same regardless of whether he wins or loses. I like that attitude.”

In the mixed doubles portion of the tournament, Dabrowski started a partnership with Mate Pavić (CROATIA). They never played together in any previous Grand Slams ever before. But they played the cleanest tennis throughout the entire tournament. They reached their first Grand Slam final without dropping a set **OR** having their serve broken [19 aces, five double faults]:

1. Lizette Cabrera (AUSTRALIA)/Alex Bolt (AUSTRALIA): 6-3 7-5
   1. Seven aces
   2. Two double faults
2. Demi Schuurs (NETHERLANDS)/Jean-Julien Rojer (NETHERLANDS): 6-1 6-3
   1. Six aces
   2. Two double faults
3. Matwé Middelkoop (NETHERLANDS)/Johanna Larsson (SWEDEN): 6-3 7-6[7-0]
   1. Three aces
   2. One double fault
4. Bruno Soares (BRAZIL)/Makarova: 6-1 6-4
   1. Three aces
   2. Zero double faults

Pavić and Dabrowski faced Babos and Bopanna in the finals. In the first set, Babos and Bopanna broke in the fourth and eighth games. In the second set, Pavić and Dabrowski broke in the seventh game. In the match tiebreak, both teams traded minibreaks. But Pavić and Dabrowski crushed down two back-to-back consecutive aces and hit a forehand return winner to clinch the title.

# **2018 STUTTGART OPEN – MEN’S SINGLES**

Milos Raonic (CANADA) reached the Stuttgart Open final without dropping a set **OR** having his serve broken:

1. Mirza Bašić (BOSNIA): 7-6[10-8] 6-2
   1. 15 aces
   2. Four double faults
2. Fucsovics: 6-2 6-4
   1. 19 aces
   2. Two double faults
3. Berdych: 7-6[7-2] 7-6[7-1]
   1. 22 aces
   2. Three double faults
4. Lucas Pouille (FRANCE): 6-4 7-6[7-3]
   1. 19 aces
   2. Two double faults

In the first set, Raonic and Federer traded service holds in the first two games before Federer broke Raonic in the third game. Raonic’s big serve helped him hold in the fifth, seventh, and ninth games. Then, Federer successfully served out the first set to love in the 10th game. This was the first time Raonic dropped serve and it was the first set he dropped all tournament. There were no breaks of serve in the second set and the second set went into a tiebreak, which Federer won.

# **2019 BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Lesia Tsurenko (UKRAINE) never played an Australian Open tune-up tournament. But when she played at the Brisbane International, her level of tennis was incredible. She reached the biggest final of her career without dropping a set:

1. Mihaela Buzărnescu (ROMANIA): 6-0 6-2
   1. Two aces
   2. Two double faults
2. Kimberly Birrell (AUSTRALIA): 6-4 6-3
   1. Five aces
   2. Three double faults
3. Anett Kontaveit (ESTONIA): 7-5 6-3
   1. Two aces
   2. One double fault
4. Naomi Osaka (JAPAN): 6-2 6-4
   1. Six aces
   2. Two double faults

Tsurenko chose to receive serve in her quarterfinal match against Kontaveit. In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first seven games. Kontaveit broke Tsurenko in the eighth game. But Tsurenko broke Kontaveit in the ninth game and held to love in the 10th game. In the 11th game, Kontaveit won the first point before Tsurenko won the next two points to gain her lead. Kontaveit and Tsurenko traded points. Then, Tsurenko broke Kontaveit to serve for the first set in the 12th game. In the 12th game, Tsurenko successfully served out the first set to love. In the second set, Kontaveit lost her first two service points in the first game. She won the next two points on her serve. But Tsurenko won the next two points to break Kontaveit. In the second game, Tsurenko raced out to triple game point before Kontaveit pegged her back on the next two points. Then, Tsurenko won the next point to hold. Kontaveit bravely held in the third, fifth, and seventh games. But Tsurenko broke in the ninth game to win the match.

Just like her quarterfinal match against Kontaveit, Tsurenko also chose to receive serve in her semifinal match against Osaka. In the first set, Tsurenko broke in the first game and held to love in the second game. Osaka held in the third and fifth games. Then, Tsurenko broke in the seventh game and successfully served out the first set in the eighth game. The second set started off in the same way as the first set. But this time, Osaka held in the third, fifth, seventh, and ninth games.

Tsurenko’s run in Brisbane set her up with a championship match against Karolína Plíšková. Tsurenko was not the favorite to win the title. But Karolína Plíšková’s form was shaky. She had to fight back from a set and a break down in her opener against Putintseva. It was not easier from there either, as Ajla Tomljanović (AUSTRALIA) pushed her to three sets in her quarterfinal match. Even though Tsurenko suffered a left ankle injury and lost in a tight three-setter, she still put up a brave fight in her run. She broke Karolína Plíšková four times out of six break chances and her six aces were cleanly balanced out with only two double faults.

# **2019 AUSTRALIAN OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES + MEN’S SINGLES**

Kvitová won Wimbledon champion in 2011 and 2014. Two years later, she was attacked during a break-in at her home in December 2016. She suffered injuries to the tendons and nerves in her dominant left hand. She was sidelined for five months and the doctors said that she may not be able to ever play tennis again. But she overcame the obstacles and reached her first Australian Open final without dropping a set:

1. Rybáriková: 6-3 6-2
2. Begu: 6-1 6-3
3. Bencic: 6-1 6-4
4. Amanda Anisimova (USA): 6-2 6-1
5. Ashleigh Barty (AUSTRALIA): 6-1 6-4
6. Danielle Collins (USA): 7-6[7-2] 6-0

The final between Kvitová and Osaka was the first head-to-head meeting between these players. The world number one ranking was also on the line. Halep was world number one in 2018 when as the Australian Open runner-up and French Open champion. But Serena sent Halep packing her bags in the fourth round. Since Halep was unable to defend her runner-up points from the previous year, she lost the number one ranking. Whoever won this match would kick Halep off the top spot. Kvitová’s game is glued together with her lefty forehand, while Osaka’s game revolves around her big serve. The first set went to a tiebreak with no breaks of serve. Osaka won the first-set tiebreak with a double minibreak. In the second set, Kvitová held in the first game and broke in the second game. Then, Osaka won four games in a row to lead by a set and a break. Kvitová saved triple championship point in the ninth game. Osaka served for the match in the 10th game. But Kvitová broke with a backhand return. In the 11th game, Kvitová won the first two points on her serve before Osaka won three points in a row to earn a break point. But Kvitová won the next three points to hold. Osaka dropped serve in the 12th game to give Kvitová the second set. In the first game of the third set, Kvitová held to love. In the second game, Osaka lost the first point on serve. But she won the next four points to hold serve. Then, she broke Kvitová in the third game and held in the fourth and sixth games. Kvitová held in the seventh game. Then, Osaka held to love in the eighth game. In the ninth game, Kvitová lost the first point on her serve. But she won four straight points with some strong lefty forehand winners to hold serve. In the 10th game, Osaka raced out to triple match point before Kvitová saved the first one. Then, Osaka crushed down an ace to win the title.

Just like Serena, 20-time Grand Slam Champion Rafael Nadal (SPAIN) is also a primary baseline player. His lefty forehand lets him hit shots with heavy topspin. He can construct winners from offense and defense. His level is unbelievable on any surface, especially since he is a 13-time French Open Champion [2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020]. His dominance at the French Open gave him the nickname “The King of Clay”. But he was also able to reach the 2019 Australian Open final without dropping a set:

1. James Duckworth (AUSTRALIA): 6-4 6-3 7-5
2. Matthew Ebden (AUSTRALIA): 6-3 6-2 6-2
3. Alex de Minaur (AUSTRALIA): 6-1 6-2 6-4
4. Berdych: 6-0 6-1 7-6[7-4]
5. Frances Tiafoe (USA): 6-3 6-4 6-2
6. Stefanos Tsitsipas (GREECE): 6-2 6-4 6-0

Tsitsipas stunned Federer in a fourth-round four-setter, where he saved all 12 break points that he faced. But in the first set of this semifinal match, Nadal already broke Tsitsipas in the third game and held to love in the fourth game. Tsitsipas and Nadal traded love holds in the fifth and sixth games. Then, Nadal broke Tsitsipas in the seventh game to serve for the first set in the eighth game. When Nadal served for the first set in the eighth game, Tsitsipas won the first point. But Nadal won the last four points to win the first set. In the second set, Tsitsipas and Nadal traded service holds for the first eight games. In the ninth game, Tsitsipas won the opening point on his serve. But he lost the next three points to face double break point. Tsitsipas saved the first break point, but not the second. Then, Nadal successfully served out the second set to love in the 10th game. These first two sets that Nadal won were an **IDENTICAL MATCH** to Tsurenko’s Brisbane International semifinal stunner over Osaka at the beginning of the season. In the third set, Nadal broke Tsitsipas in the first game and held to love in the second game. Then, Nadal broke Tsitsipas in the third game. In the fourth game, Tsitsipas won the first point on Nadal’s serve. But Nadal won the next four points to hold. In the fifth game, Tsitsipas dropped serve at love in the fifth game to let Nadal serve for the match. When Nadal served for the match in the sixth game, he lost the first point before he won the next two points to regain his lead. Tsitsipas won the next two points to earn his only break point of the match. But instead of it being a break of serve, Nadal was able to save the break point with a backhand volley dropshot. Deuce became match point for Nadal when Tsitsipas missed a backhand return. Then, Nadal won with a second backhand error from Tsitsipas. Originally before this match started, it was predicted that Tsitipas would push Nadal to four sets. But several people pointed out that Tsitsipas’s game matched up better with Federer’s than Nadal’s. This may be hard to believe. But I saw this match firsthand myself when Tsitsipas’s game completely spiraled out of control with his erratic stats of five aces, two double faults, 17 winners, and 22 unforced errors. Fortunately for Nadal though, he was able to keep his stats clean with five aces, zero double faults, 30 winners, and 14 unforced errors.

When Nadal set up a final against Djokovic, Rod Laver Arena was in for a thriller. Djokovic shares the same playing style with Nadal and Serena. His groundstrokes from both the forehand and backhand wings are consistent and deep. His best shot is his backhand down the line. He is one of the greatest movers on the court with court coverage, which let him hit winners from defensive positions. Djokovic led the head-to-head in Grand Slam meetings against Nadal. But his form in this tournament was not up-to-par. He got pushed to four sets in two of his matches. Even though Nadal lost to Djokovic in straight sets, Djokovic praised Nadal for his run. “Rafa was in great form, he hadn’t dropped a set the entire tournament. He played impressively well throughout the entire tournament. He played some of his best tennis on hard courts.”

# **2019 MIAMI OPEN – MEN’S SINGLES**

Isner won the Miami Open in 2018. He returned to the tournament one year later as the defending champion. Nine of the ten sets he played were tiebreakers. But his level in this edition of the tournament was impressive. He was the **ONLY** player to have **NOT** dropped a set alltournament:

1. Lorenzo Sonego (ITALY): 7-6[7-2] 7-6[9-7]
   1. 20 aces
   2. Three double faults
2. Albert Ramos Viñolas (SPAIN): 7-5 7-6[8-6]
   1. 16 aces
   2. Two double faults
3. Kyle Edmund (GREAT BRITAIN): 7-6[7-5] 7-6[7-3]
   1. 18 aces
   2. One double fault
4. Bautista Agut: 7-6[7-1] 7-6[7-5]
   1. 25 aces
   2. One double fault
5. Félix Auger-Aliassime (CANADA): 7-6[7-3] 7-6[7-4]
   1. 21 aces
   2. Two double faults

In the first set, Isner and Auger-Aliassime traded service holds for the first six games. Auger-Aliassime broke Isner to love in the seventh game and held in the eighth game. Isner held to love in the ninth game, then broke Auger-Aliassime in the 10th game to get the set back on serve. Isner held to love in the 11th game. Then, Auger-Aliassime held in the 12th game to send the first set into a tiebreak, which Isner won. In the second set, the first five games of the second set went on serve. Auger-Aliassime broke Isner in the sixth game and held in the seventh game. Then, Isner held in the eighth game. Just like the 10th game in the first set, Auger-Aliassime served for the second set in the ninth game. Auger-Aliassime won the first point before Isner won the next three points to earn two break points. Auger-Aliassime saved the first but missed a swing volley on the second to let Isner in back on serve. In the 10th game, Isner lost his first service point. But he won the next three points to give himself two game points. Auger-Aliassime saved the first. But Isner crushed an ace to hold. Both players traded service holds in the 11th and 12th games to send the set into a second-set tiebreak. Like the first set tiebreak, Isner dominated the second set tiebreak and won the match. This set him up with a championship match against Federer. Federer himself also loved Isner’s win against Auger-Aliassime! “He’s got an amazing serve, one of the best in the game forever. I am a big fan of his game. I am excited to play John. He had a tough match against Felix. That was an awesome performance by him.”

Even though Isner lost to Federer in straight sets in the final, he still was happy with his run on being able to win all his previous matches in straight sets. I was also touched when Federer sat next to Isner during the trophy ceremony and the two guys shared some laughs together. Federer gave lots of praise to Isner. “John is a great player, a great person.”

# **2019 MUTUA MADRID OPEN – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

Kiki Bertens (NETHERLANDS) reached the Mutua Madrid Open final in 2018, where she finished as the runner-up to Kvitová in three tight sets. But one year later, she went one step better. She beat four Grand Slam champions [Ostapenko, Kvitová, Stephens, and Halep] along the way and became the first woman to win the title without dropping a set:

1. Siniaková: 6-3 6-2
2. Ostapenko: 6-4 6-3
3. Sevastova: 6-1 6-2
4. Kvitová: 6-2 6-3
5. Stephens: 6-2 7-5
6. Halep 6-4 6-4

In her semifinal match against Stephens, Bertens chose to receive serve. Bertens broke in the first and fifth games before Stephens held in the third and seventh games. Then, Bertens successfully served out the first set in the eighth game. In the second set, Stephens broke Bertens in the sixth game. Then, Bertens broke Stephens in the seventh game and held in the eighth game. After Stephens held in the ninth game, Bertens was serving to stay in the set in the 10th game. Bertens was down triple set point. But she won five straight points to hold. Then, she broke Stephens in the 11th game and successfully served out the match in the 12th game.

With the win against Stephens, Bertens set up a final against Halep. Halep won four sets without dropping a game and lost only one set in her semifinal match to Bencic in a second-set tiebreak. Since she won the title in 2016 and 2017, Halep was the heavy favorite to win her third Madrid title. But her semifinal win against Bencic was a physical challenge in a 2-hour battle and she was battling illness throughout the tournament. Fortunately for Bertens though, she spent less time on court and had an earlier finish in her semifinal win against Stephens. The earlier finish gave her the opportunity to squeeze in lots of recovery as much as possible. Just like her semifinal match against Stephens, Bertens chose to receive serve against Halep in the finals. Halep got off to a strong start when she broke in the fourth and sixth games. But Bertens was able to get back on serve when she broke in the fifth and seventh games. Then, Bertens broke Halep for the third straight time in the ninth game and successfully served out the first set in the 10th game. Even though Bertens got off to a slow start, she was able to turn the set around after her serve snapped into place. She got Halep running off the court to open space from corner to corner. Once the second set started, Bertens was on a roll. After being broken twice in the fourth and sixth games in the first set, she was broken only once in the fourth game of the second set. She successfully served out the match in the 10th game to win the biggest title of her career.

# **2019 BIRMINGHAM CLASSIC – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

After winning her first Grand Slam title at the French Open, Barty became the number one player in the world after she won the Birmingham Classic without dropping a set:

1. Donna Vekić (CROATIA): 6-3 6-4
2. Jennifer Brady (USA): 6-3 6-1
3. Venus: 6-4 6-3
4. Strýcová: 6-4 6-4
5. Julia Görges (GERMANY): 6-3 7-5

In the championship match, the first five games went on serve before Barty broke Görges in the sixth game and held in the seventh game. Görges held to love in the eighth game. Then, Barty successfully served out the first set to love in the ninth game. In the second set, Görges won the first three games, then Barty held in the fourth game and broke in the fifth game. Both players traded service holds for the next five games. In the 10th game, Görges won the first two points on Barty’s serve before Barty found two big first serves. Görges won the next point to give herself a set point. But Barty held with two aces. Then, Görges lost serve in the 11th game to let Barty serve for the match in the 12th game. Next, Barty successfully served out the match to love.

# **2019 WIMBLEDON – WOMEN’S DOUBLES**

Hsieh and Strýcová won titles in Indian Wells, Dubai, Madrid, and Birmingham. Hsieh can play two-handed on both her forehand and backhand sides. Strýcová can maneuver around the court with serving and volleying. At Wimbledon, they won their first Grand Slam title without dropping a set:

1. Mona Barthel (GERMANY)/Xenia Knoll (SWITZERLAND): 6-2 6-1
2. Ekaterina Alexandrova (RUSSIA)/Viktorija Golubic (SWITZERLAND): 6-2 6-2
3. Begu/Monica Niculescu (ROMANIA): 6-3 6-4
4. Aryna Sabalenka (BELARUS)/Elise Mertens (BELGIUM): 6-4 6-2
5. Babos/Mladenovic: 7-6[7-5] 6-4
6. Dabrowski/Yifan Xu (CHINA): 6-2 6-4

Hsieh and Strýcová played their cleanest tennis in the semifinals against Babos and Mladenovic. In the first set, both teams traded service holds for the first 12 games before it went into a tiebreak. Babos and Mladenovic went up a mini break on the first point. But Hsieh and Strýcová returned the next won the first set with a minibreak lead of their own. In the second set, Hsieh and Strýcová broke Babos and Mladenovic in the first game to lead by a set and a break. In the second game, Hsieh and Strýcová lost their first service point. But they won the next four points to hold. The Hungarian-French duo were brave enough to save two match points on their serve in the ninth game. But Hsieh and Strýcová successfully served out the match in the 10th game. Even though Babos and Mladenovic put up a brave fight, Hsieh and Strýcová were one level higher with some super clean stats – zero break points faced, zero aces, and zero double faults.

# **2019 ROLEX PARIS MASTERS – MEN’S SINGLES**

Djokovic was defending finalist points from the previous year when he was the runner-up to Karen Khachanov (RUSSIA). But one year later, he won the title without dropping a set:

1. Corentin Moutet (FRANCE): 7-6[7-2] 6-4
2. Kyle Edmund (GREAT BRITAIN): 7-6[9-7] 6-1
3. Tsitsipas: 6-1 6-2
4. Grigor Dimitrov (BULGARIA): 7-6[7-5] 6-4
5. Shapovalov: 6-3 6-4

In his opener against Moutet, both players traded service holds for the first six games. In the seventh game, Moutet earned triple break point before Djokovic saved the first two and lost the third. After Moutet held in the eighth game, Djokovic held in the ninth game and broke Moutet in the 10th game to get back on serve. The next two games went on serve before the first set into a tiebreak, which Djokovic won with a double minibreak. In the second set, Moutet and Djokovic traded service holds for the first two games. Then, Djokovic broke in the third and fifth games to go up a double break. Moutet broke in the sixth game and held in the seventh and ninth games. But Djokovic successfully served out the match to love in the 10th game.

In the semifinals against Dimitrov, both players traded service holds for all 12 games in the first set and Djokovic won the first-set tiebreak. In the second set, Dimitrov and Djokovic traded service holds for the first four games. Then, Djokovic broke Dimitrov in the fifth game. Dimitrov held in the seventh and ninth games. Next, Djokovic successfully served out the match to love in the 10th game. He did not face a single break point in the match. Hsieh and Strýcová also won their 2019 Wimbledon semifinal against Babos and Mladenovic with this **SAME EXACT** scoreline in identical fashion. But the only difference between these two matches was the serving stats and where the decisive break came in.

# **2020 ADELAIDE INTERNATIONAL – WOMEN’S SINGLES**

The Adelaide International is held in Adelaide at the Memorial Drive Tennis Centre. It is a tune-up tournament that leads up to the Australian Open. Dayana Yastremska (UKRAINE) had a breakthrough in her career. At the end of 2018 and through 2019, she reached three WTA Finals without dropping a set [she lost zero sets throughout the entire tournament when she won her first WTA title in Hong Kong]:

**2018 HONG KONG**

1. Fanny Stollár (HUNGARY): 6-4 6-4
2. Zheng: 6-3 6-3
3. Kristína Kučová (SLOVAKIA): 7-6[8-6] 6-2
4. Shuai Zhang (CHINA): 7-5 6-4
5. Wang Qiang (CHINA): 6-2 6-1

**2019 HUA HIN**

1. Aranxta Rus (NETHERLANDS): 6-0 6-3
2. Shuai Peng (CHINA): 6-1 6-4
3. Muguruza: 7-6[7-5] 6-1
4. Magda Linette (POLAND): 6-4 6-3

**2019 STRASBOURG**

1. Pauline Parmentier (FRANCE): 6-2 6-4
2. Stosur: 6-0 6-2
3. Fiona Ferro (FRANCE): 6-1 6-3
4. Aryna Sabalenka (BELARUS): 6-4 6-4

When Yastremska won the championship matches in Hua Hin and Strasbourg, she got pushed to third-set tiebreaks against Tomljanović and Caroline Garcia (FRANCE), respectively. One year later, the Adelaide International was Yastremska’s first tournament she ever played in Australia. She reached the biggest final of her career without dropping a set:

1. Babos: 7-5 6-3
2. Kerber: 6-3 2-0
3. Vekić: 6-4 6-3
4. Sabalenka: 6-4 7-6[7-4]

In her semifinal match against Sabalenka, Yastremska chose to receive serve. In the first set, both players traded service holds for the first four games. Then, Yastremska broke in the fifth game. This was the only break of the first set. In the second set, Yastremska broke in the first game. But Sabalenka broke in the sixth game to get back on serve. Then, both players continued to trade service holds. Sabalenka was multiple points away from forcing a third set in the 10th and 12th games. But Yastremska was able to force a second tie-break. She earned a minibreak on the first point and ultimately sealed the deal on her fourth match point.

Even though Yastremska lost the championship match to Barty in straight sets, Barty still praised Yastremska for her incredible run. “Dayana is an exceptional ball striker, as well. She wants to be inside the court. She craves that court position and thrives when she's ahead.”

# **2020 ABIERTO MEXICANO TELCEL**

Currently at 18 years old, Leylah Fernandez (CANADA) is the youngest Canadian teenager to be ranked in the top 100 of the WTA rankings. In her junior career at 16 years old, she reached two Grand Slam finals without dropping a set:

**2019 AUSTRALIAN OPEN**

1. Kylie Collins (USA): 6-3 6-2
2. Moyuka Uchijima (JAPAN): 6-4 7-6[7-5]
3. Lisa Pigato (ITALY): 6-3 7-5
4. Manon Léonard (FRANCE): 6-3 6-1
5. Anastasia Tikhonova (RUSSIA): 6-1 6-3

**2019 FRENCH OPEN**

1. Mariia Tkacheva (RUSSIA): 7-5 6-3
2. Marta Custic (SPAIN): 6-0 6-3
3. Park So-hyun (SOUTH KOREA): 6-2 6-0
4. Elsa Jacquemot (FRANCE): 6-0 6-0
5. María Camila Osorio Serrano (COLOMBIA): 6-2 6-4

Fernandez lost the Australian Open championship match to Clara Tauson (DENMARK). But she was able to rebound by winning the French Open final with a straight set win over Emma Navarro (USA).

One year later at 17 years old, she climbed up the rankings in her senior career. She breezed through to her first ever WTA Final without dropping a set:

**QUALIFYING**

1. Lizette Cabrera (AUSTRALIA): 6-3 6-1
2. Lepchenko: 6-3 6-3

**MAIN DRAW**

1. Nina Stojanović (SERBIA): 6-4 6-1
2. Nao Hibino (JAPAN): 6-3 6-0
3. Anatasia Potapova (RUSSIA): 6-3 7-5
4. Renata Zarazúa (MEXICO): 6-3 6-3

From the qualifying draw, Fernandez maintained her perfect streak of 12 sets won and zero sets lost. Even though she came up short in a three-set championship match to Heather Watson (GREAT BRITAIN), Watson still praised Fernandez for her run. “I’ve played Leylah two times before this, and I knew what to expect. She is a great player, and it would be tough because the two matches before that had been tough. The thing I notice about her the most is the head on her shoulders. She is very, very mature for her age. I think it is her mental toughness that really stands out. I think she’s going to have a great career ahead of her and rise up the rankings very quickly if she keeps playing like this.”

# **YTD STATS**

Serena has always been my favorite tennis players. Her consistency is highlighted with more wins, less losses, and solid winning percentile ranges. I came up with the idea to collect her data, organize it in a table, and analyze that data. First, I collected Serena’s data from the WTA website. Then, I organized her data into a table with headings:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **YEAR** | **TOURNAMENTS** | **TITLES** | **WINS** | **LOSSES** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| 1997 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 5 | 44% |
| 1998 | 11 | 0 | 29 | 11 | 62% |
| 1999 | 13 | 5 | 41 | 7 | 83% |
| 2000 | 11 | 3 | 37 | 8 | 78% |
| 2001 | 10 | 3 | 38 | 7 | 82% |
| 2002 | 13 | 8 | 56 | 5 | 91% |
| 2003 | 8 | 4 | 38 | 3 | 92% |
| 2004 | 12 | 2 | 39 | 9 | 77% |
| 2005 | 10 | 1 | 21 | 7 | 67% |
| 2006 | 4 | 0 | 12 | 4 | 67% |
| 2007 | 13 | 2 | 35 | 10 | 71% |
| 2008 | 13 | 4 | 44 | 8 | 82% |
| 2009 | 16 | 3 | 50 | 12 | 76% |
| 2010 | 6 | 2 | 25 | 4 | 84% |
| 2011 | 6 | 2 | 22 | 3 | 86% |
| 2012 | 15 | 7 | 58 | 4 | 93% |
| 2013 | 16 | 11 | 78 | 4 | 95% |
| 2014 | 16 | 7 | 52 | 8 | 85% |
| 2015 | 13 | 5 | 53 | 3 | 94% |
| 2016 | 8 | 2 | 38 | 6 | 84% |
| 2017 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 88% |
| 2018 | 7 | 0 | 18 | 6 | 67% |
| 2019 | 8 | 0 | 25 | 6 | 76% |
| 2020 | 6 | 1 | 17 | 5 | 71% |
| **SUM** | **242** | **73** | **843** | **146** | **83%** |
| **AVERAGE** | **10** | **3** | **35** | **6** | **83%** |
| **MINIMUM** | **2** | **0** | **8** | **1** | **88%** |
| **MAXIMUM** | **16** | **11** | **78** | **12** | **85%** |

After I organized her data in a table, I created two charts. The first chart was a clustered column chart for her wins and losses. Then, the second chart was a line chart with a trendline. This shows how Serena’s winning percentile range changed over the years.

Serena’s winning percentile fluctuated from 1997 to 2011, then again from 2018 until 2020. Based on the data in the table, her average, minimum, and maximum winning percentile ranges were in the 80s. When I added the trendline for the next two years from 2020, the analysis told me that Serena’s winning percentile ranges for 2021 and 2022 are between 80% and 90%.

# **SOURCES**

I hope my readers enjoyed reading about consistency! If you want to get more insight about this topic, feel free to watch these YouTube videos at your convenience!

# **2002 WINTER OLYMPICS**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4S7c9s56A4>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjY_LtNtVDc>

# **AMERICAN IDOL**

1. Season 6 [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBzOWsBkjZw>]
2. Season 7 [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=123_f5FCLq0>]
3. Season 10 [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-JgS6Bhdrs>]

# **2010 WIMBLEDON**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoDnsqnQ4Tc>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWsGFNBpWVE>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDuf1UOV5uY>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kwNu2HOZO8>
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pel7S0n3V_k>
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsAdVyEXdV0>
7. <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7tc1qx>

**2011 US OPEN**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XojByvxPOBQ>

**2012 STANFORD**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG18HkIKghw>

**2012 OLYMPICS**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMUjXz7TuFk>

**2013 BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYWoiRt4U9Q>

# **2014 BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Qz1TNfLh-M>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=470YB7JivGo>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvLd7TNjO8k>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-iTgZeaP8s>

# **2014 US OPEN**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_N_1zPMgh2U>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7fCn_Y4yEk>

**2015 US OPEN**

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=634UMLDrVzc>

**2015 WTA FINALS**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALSJD_1tJ5o>

# **2016 AUSTRALIAN OPEN**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1u8p2v0Zws>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yp5DCUib1nc>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZbYobSBwjM>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AimypuXJjFo>
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdBDPd7Lf8I>
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FQkBD96usI>

**2017 AUSTRALIAN OPEN**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DlB4YvHyeoo>

# **2018 AUSTRALIAN OPEN**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPWj01Q1Jx0>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BODJnANg4Xs>

**2019 AUSTRALIAN OPEN**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ox8uWPCn0I>

**2019 MUTUA MADRID OPEN**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx6k-yXL93M>

**2019 BIRMINGHAM CLASSIC**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PPNqLRkoG8>

# **2020 ADELAIDE INTERNATIONAL**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GL8DOgodemQ>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQ8gw1bh17w>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfdRJmrQb9s>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4QZBtnKPjg>