

**July 16, 2007**



An interview with:

## **VENUS WILLIAMS**

MEDIA NOTE: Venus Williams is returning for her fourth World TeamTennis season, her second with the Philadelphia Freedoms. She is playing 4 WTT matches this summer:

- ◆ Tuesday, July 17 @ New York Sportimes (Mamaroneck, N.Y.)
- ◆ Wednesday, July 18 @ Boston Lobsters
- ◆ Friday, July 20 @ Philadelphia
- ◆ Sunday, July 22 @ Newport Beach Breakers

ROSIE CREWS: Hi this is Rosie Crews with World TeamTennis. I want to welcome Venus Williams. Venus, I know you've been busy so thank you so much for taking the time. We look forward to having you back for your fourth year of World TeamTennis, your second year with the Freedoms. She'll start tomorrow night in Mamaroneck, Wednesday night in Boston, Friday in Philadelphia and Sunday in Newport Beach.

We'll go to questions for Venus.

**Q. After that Wimbledon win, I'm sure this must be crazy. How are you taking it coming from No. 31, the lowest seed?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: It's exciting. I always believed I could do it. To do it is definitely really, really hard work. I feel really, really excited, obviously really blessed.

**Q. What keeps you coming back to World TeamTennis to play?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I enjoy it, have fun. I love playing on the team with the people I play on the team with. I love playing with Lisa Raymond. We just played in Fed Cup this weekend. In general, I just have a great time. It's a great way to play tennis and really enjoy the moment.

**Q. You and your sister have raised women's tennis to a different level. How can the sport overall get more African Americans involved?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I'm not sure. I'm not sure what the answer would be to that question.

**Q. Do you think maybe to add it more in urban communities? Here in Pennsylvania, they opened the Arthur Ashe Center where tennis is really big. Do you think maybe adding it more in urban communities?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think that could be an idea, for sure.

**Q. The last time you won Wimbledon, I think your first stop for World TeamTennis was Mamaroneck. This time you win Wimbledon, you're coming to Mamaroneck. Is this going to be a regular stop for you now?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think it's a great idea. Becoming a little bit of a tradition for me. But I had a great time there last year. Last year I was a little bit off. I think I was just coming off Wimbledon, on a whirlwind. I hadn't had a chance to practice. I remember it was a little bit tough. But this time I've been well-practiced. I just came off Fed Cup, so I'm hoping to have a great showing.

**Q. You sign up for TeamTennis, then you win Wimbledon. Any thought about maybe you need a break before the US Open Series, all of the other competitive events coming up in the summer?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Well, I have a week off after TeamTennis. That will be enough. I really enjoy playing. With the way the tour works, I'm only able to play certain weeks. So it's really important for me to get a chance to play when I have a chance to.

**Q. Are you playing New Haven this year?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: No, I'm not.

**Q. I was talking to Arantxa Sanchez yesterday. She was telling me in '94, the WTT really helped her gear up for the US Open. Have you found that to be the case?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Well, I hope it helps me gear up. I think that playing the singles, the doubles and the mixed is huge for me because I get to see the ball so many times. Previously, my other previous years, I played well at the Open after playing TeamTennis.

**Q. A lot of players don't like to play WTT because they'd rather play tournaments and get the points. What do you think could be done to get more stars like yourself out for WTT?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Well, I think the players play as they can. At this time of year it's tough. Three Grand Slams have been finished and sometimes your body is a little bit tired.

After I played TeamTennis in '05, I knew for sure I wanted to play as much as possible because I had so much fun. Before that I don't think I played since 2000. Every year it's been a priority for me, every year I get in the draft.

**Q. Do you see any difference between the Philadelphia audience and the Delaware audience that you played to when you came back after that big win over Lindsay Davenport? Do you see anything different with where you're playing?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Well, I think the thing about TeamTennis is that all the fans are really into their teams, really into the experience. It's somewhat hard to separate. Of course, I'm playing at home, Philadelphia, so that's a huge difference. Everyone's so enthusiastic.

I think with Billie Jean for tennis, it was important to see all the fans be able to participate, and that's what really happened. So it's amazing.

**Q. Getting the equal pay at Wimbledon was a huge milestone for you. You recognized it when you won the event. Where do you take it from here?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: From here I'm just working with UNESCO. We announced a partnership last year with the WTA Tour. I'm the ambassador for that partnership for helping women

around the world in sports and sciences and that kind of thing. I think it's going to be exciting for me to work with that. And obviously to continue to make the women's tour a better place for women. That's what's up next for me obviously off the court.

**Q. What experience do you have in Philadelphia and what memories kind of stick out in your mind of the city?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think just the venue. I really enjoyed the venue. It was very pretty. I actually had an afternoon to kind of sit down and enjoy the summer, which is rare. I enjoyed that a lot. Just playing at home was fantastic. Home team.

**Q. Your experience with Lisa Raymond, what is it about the two of you that bond so well?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Lisa is a great person, she really is. She's fun. She's enthusiastic. She has a great personality, a lot of energy. I really enjoy knowing her and being on the Fed Cup with her and obviously being on TeamTennis with her.

**Q. Is that one of the draws to come to TeamTennis and the Philadelphia team in particular?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Exactly. I always request to play with Lisa. I love playing with Rennae Stubbs actually. I always request to play with Rennae. She's not here this year, she had to play Fed Cup.

**Q. You've been a busy girl lately.**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I have.

**Q. You filed an entry at what one might say the 11th hour for the Acura Classic. Did you do that because you're aware that Serena is not going to be able to play at La Costa?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I've been planning on playing the Acura Classic for a while now. I pretty much leave it up to my agents to enter me into tournaments at the right time. I'm not sure when they entered me, but I've been planning on playing.

**Q. What is your thinking about Serena's status at the moment? Is that thumb injury continuing to bother her?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Well, I try not to speak about her injuries. I usually let her speak about it. She's really eager to play. She's eager to obviously continue her success.

**Q. In looking back at your history at La Costa, the thing one is struck by is in two of the three times you won there, you beat Monica Seles in the final. That was at a time when Monica wasn't losing very often to anybody. Is that something you value particularly? I know it doesn't compare to winning Wimbledon as often as you have.**

VENUS WILLIAMS: For sure, I loved playing her. We had some epic matches, that's for sure. I always knew every time I played her I had to bring my best out on the court. Over the last five years, I just haven't been lucky with injuries. I haven't had a chance to play, so this is my chance now - my last chance.

**Q. Could you talk a little about your relationship with Billie Jean King and why you felt compelled to acknowledge her after your Wimbledon win. Does it make it more special to be playing for the team that Billie Jean owns?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I thought it was important because obviously equal prize money has been a huge issue for the last few years, and Billie Jean King has long been fighting for it also, actively fighting for it alongside all the other WTA Tour players the last couple years.

I wanted to acknowledge what she's done for tennis, for women's tennis, and single-handedly starting the tour, being such a visionary. People should know and recognize that and appreciate that. There's Venus and Serena because of Billie.

**Q. You mentioned playing with Lisa Raymond. What does playing doubles do for your singles game and will you play doubles with Serena at the Open this year?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: We haven't thought about playing doubles at the Open. We were in Wimbledon, playing quite well. Obviously injury stopped our run, our brief run.

Playing with Lisa I think is really a huge asset for me because I'm not on the doubles court a lot. So being on the court with her helps me to

kind of fast track it, you know. I do learn a lot from her. I ask her questions. We both play well together so it's great.

**Q. What about Lindsay coming back and playing WTT, what are your thoughts about that? Have you spoken to her since the baby?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: No, I haven't. I think it's amazing that she's getting so fit so quickly. I'm looking forward to obviously seeing her. It will be great.

**Q. With the way you're playing right now, would you consider yourself a favorite for the Acura Classic?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: Oh, thank you very much. I have a huge goal this summer. I really would like to win every match I play. I have to work very hard to do it. If the players see me as a favorite, and the fans, it puts me in a great position. That makes me feel good.

**Q. What would it mean to win the very last one for you?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think three times in a row. I won three times in a row, then I couldn't come back. It's been challenging. I love playing in California in the summer because I'm from there. This will be great to come back, to show my stuff one more time.

**Q. Are you kind of sad it's the last Acura tournament? What does that really say about women's tennis that San Diego is not going to be having a tournament after this year?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: It's going to be strange. All the players love San Diego. It always gets voted favorite tournament. I know a lot of players will be sad because not only did we come and play great tennis, but we also get to relax, which is rare.

I think it's sad for the players and the fans.

**Q. Are you playing Carson?**

VENUS WILLIAMS: No, I am planning on playing just Toronto and San Diego. I think that will be a great preparation for me going into the Open.

ROSIE CREWS: Venus, thank you so much.

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