



PHOTO: AFP

Unseeded American Serena Williams sports an ear-to-ear grin as she flashes the thumbs-up sign following her sensational triumph in the final of the Australian Open over top seeded Russian Maria Sharapova in Melbourne on Saturday.

'For my sister'



AFP, Melbourne

An emotional Serena Williams on Saturday dedicated her third Australian Open title to half-sister Yetunde Price who was shot dead in Los Angeles in 2003, saying her memory motivated her to win.

"Most of all I would like to dedicate this win to my sister who's not here any more, Yetunde, I just love her so much," said Williams, who shocked the tennis world by thrashing top seed Maria Sharapova 6-1, 6-2.

"I'll try not to be teary-eyed but a couple of days ago I said to myself that if I win this it's going to be for

her -- so thanks 'Tunde."

Williams has a habit of writing notes during her matches on what she needs to work on, but on Saturday there was only word in her notebook -- Yetunde.

"Every day I write notes, you know, from my match. Not every day, but every match I wrote notes," she said.

"Today my note was just Yetunde. That was all my notes. That's it."

"Usually I write, 'look at the ball, move forward, do this, do that.' Today I just had one word."

"Every changeover I looked at it and I just thought about how happy she would have been, how much she always supported me."

"I just thought about what an amazing sister she was to me. I just said, 'Serena, this has to be moti-

vating. This has to be more than enough to motivate me'. And I think it was."

Price, a divorced mother-of-three, was shot in the head as she sat in her white sports utility vehicle outside a house suspected of drug activity in Compton, the gang heartland of Los Angeles.

The scene was not far from where her two youngest sisters, Venus and Serena, first played the game that would rocket them to international fame.

The bullet that struck Price was one of about 11 Robert Maxfield fired from an assault rifle to protect the drug house, jurors were told at his trial.

Maxfield, 25, pleaded no contest to the voluntary manslaughter of Price and last year was sentenced

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Ronaldo undergoes Milan medical

AFP, Rome

Real Madrid striker Ronaldo underwent his medical with AC Milan early Friday before talks with coach Carlo Ancelotti at the Serie A side's training centre at Maranello ahead of next week's expected transfer.

Ronaldo was accompanied by his old Brazilian team-mate Leonardo, a former AC Milan player but now part of the back-room staff, at the clinic in Appiano Gentile to the north of Milan.

The 30-year-old, three-time FIFA World Player of the Year but out of favour at Madrid, is expected to sign for six million euros, according to the Spanish and Italian press though anywhere from five million to 10 million euros has also been touted. At Maranello, Ronaldo saw Paolo Maldini. "We said hello and I hope to meet him in the next few days," Ronaldo said of the famous Italy international left back.

"He made a good impression on me and I have always wanted to play with him," Ronaldo said. "He is a champion and a brave player, the greatest of all the opponents I have come up against after Maradona."

Maldini himself said: "He (Ronaldo) has made the choice of a champion (in coming to AC Milan). He remains one of the world's greatest players."

Ronaldo's Brazilian teammate Kaka also remarked: "To speak

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Capello retakes Becks stance

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello hinted he might have been wrong to have indicated David Beckham would not pull on the white shirt again after agreeing to join LA Galaxy this summer.

"You can get things wrong but these are things which involve the technical staff. When I see a player in good form and with a good mentality he can be on the team."

"We will try to see if there are players who can have a future with Real Madrid," said Capello, who has permanently frozen out Ronaldo, the Brazilian striker who earlier Friday had a medical in Italy prior to finalising his move to AC Milan.

However, Beckham will not feature at Villarreal on Saturday, as he has an ankle injury, Capello added.

"He didn't train today - his ankle is hurting him," Capello said.

The online edition of El Mundo newspaper, at least, was not convinced as it headlined an article: "a new suspicious injury for Becks," describing the problem as a "tendinitis."

Capello meanwhile battled away questions about Real's interest in Manchester United's Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo, amid reports the Spaniards would pay up to 50 million euros (65 million dollars) for the 21-year-old.

"He plays for Manchester," Capello said.

A win at Villarreal could put Real top of the table. They currently trail Barcelona by a single point.

Serena conquers Down Under



AFP, Melbourne

An emotional Serena Williams swatted aside top seed and world number one Maria Sharapova 6-1, 6-2 in the Australian Open final Saturday to win her eighth Grand Slam and prove the critics wrong.

Sharapova had no answer to Williams' booming serve and blistering returns as the American completed a fairytale return from injury with a third Australian title to join her 2003 and 2005 trophies.

Coming into the final unseeded, the 25-year-old made a mockery of her world ranking of 81 to humiliate Sharapova and become the first unseeded player since 1978 to claim the Australian title.

Williams dedicated the win to her sister Yetunde, who was shot in Los Angeles' notorious Compton district in 2003.

"Most of all I would like to dedicate

this win to my sister who's not here any more, Yetunde, I just love her so much," she said, her voice breaking as she fought back tears.

"I'll try not to be teary-eyed but a couple of days ago I said if I win this it's going to be for her -- so thanks 'Tunde."

Williams, whose win will propel her to number 14 in the rankings, also hit back at the critics who wrote her off before the tournament.

"It was an awesome win because I had so many critics, so many people talking bad and saying negative things and saying I wasn't fit when I felt that I was really fit and could last three sets and two-and-a-half or three hours no worries," she said. "I actually did that throughout the tournament, so you tell me no and I'll show you that I can do it."

Sharapova, 19, said she had always viewed Williams as a threat, regardless of her ranking, saying "you can never underestimate her".

"I know what she's capable of and she showed it today, she's an amazing champion, she's showed it here many times."

"She came out today and she really played flawless tennis."

Williams said she felt the signs were good when she saw the roof of the Rod Laver Arena was closed because of drizzle, as it had been for her previous victories in Melbourne.

Serving first, she signalled her intentions when she fired down an ace to take the opening game, showing none of the lapses in concentration that forced her to fight back from a set down twice in the tournament.

She drew first blood with a break in the second game when the serving woes that have dogged Sharapova's campaign continued and she double faulted twice.

Williams punished Sharapova's tentative serve with sizzling returns and she stunned the Russian with another break to go up 4-0 after just 14 minutes.

The shell-shocked Russian finally managed to defend her serve for 5-1 but accidentally hit a ball directly at her opponent, only firing up Williams further.

She served out the set after 26 minutes and Sharapova's woes

continued when she double faulted to open the second.

The American continued to dominate, breaking in the first game then holding her own serve with an ace.

Any doubts about her fitness were dispelled as she leapt around the court, charging to the net to bludgeon the ball past Sharapova.

It was 10 games and 43 minutes into the match before Sharapova served an ace and less than 50 per cent of her first serves were successful.

She clung on to defend her serve twice in the second set but could do little against the Williams onslaught, muttering "too good" to herself after another rocket-powered return from her opponent whizzed past.

Williams served out the match and dropped to the ground in relief then bowed to the cheering crowd and performed a dance move while awaiting the presentations.

Sharapova simply sat courtside and stared into the distance after one of the most lopsided finals in recent memory.

Maria vows to learn



AFP, Melbourne

Maria Sharapova said she would carry the memory of Saturday's Australian Open thrashing from a "flawless" Serena Williams for the rest of her career and use it to make her stronger.

The Russian pin-up admitted she sought solace from her mother Yelena after being humiliated 6-1, 6-2, despite going in as top seed and world number one against an unseeded opponent ranked 81.

Sharapova said she was disappointed at losing a Grand Slam decider for the first time after winning both her previous appearances in the final of a major, at

Wimbledon in 2004 and last year's US Open.

The ultra-competitive 19-year-old said she always hated losing but Saturday's drubbing was particularly galling since it was her mother Yelena's birthday and she wanted to dedicate the win to her.

"I'll be honest with you, I don't like losing. You all know that," she told reporters.

"It's not fun. You go back in the locker room (thinking) 'dam it, I just lost, someone is celebrating over there, they're going to be opening a bottle of champagne'."

Sharapova said her mother had told her to use the loss as a motivational spur in the future, rather than allowing it to haunt her.

"These moments make you stronger, not necessarily now," she said.

"When I win or lose, I always call

my mom. She always tells me, 'Look, you got a tournament next week, you've got to focus on that'."

"You're going to remember this day in your future, in your career when you're going to look back and say this really taught me something, this only made me stronger, this has happened many times."

"Unfortunately, it was my mom's birthday today and I couldn't win for her. But she still made me happy, made me realize this is just another loss."

Sharapova said Williams had made the most of her chances and ruthlessly punished her errors.

"She came out today and she really played flawless tennis," she said. "Maybe you personally gave her those chances ... but on the other side she still had to do it, had to go out and play well, and she did."

Dortmund win a thriller

INTERNET, undated



The Bundesliga returned with a bang on Friday night as Borussia Dortmund edged a five-goal thriller against champions Bayern Munich 3-2 in front of over 80,000 fans at the Westfalen Stadium.

After a six-week winter break, Dortmund showed just how much they have progressed since Jurgen Rober took over with two goals from Alexander Frei, after 12 and 57 minutes, and a Tinga strike just before the hour mark earning them precious three points.

Daniel van Buyten had brought Bayern level in the 25th minute and a Roy Makaay goal took them into

the break ahead.

But two goals in two minutes turned the game on its head once again to leave Bayern off the pace at the top of the table.

Dortmund captain Christoph Metzelder was starting only his first game since the opening-day defeat to Bayern.

For the visitors, Ali Karimi was the surprise name in the starting XI.

The Iranian midfielder benefited from the unexpected retirement of Sebastian Deisler, an injury to Owen Hargreaves and his own impressive form in training recently to take his place on the left wing.

He did not have much of a sight of the ball in the first 20 minutes, though, as the passionate, enterprising football demanded by new Dortmund coach Rober put Bayern straight on the back foot.

The warning sign came from

Metzelder, who headed a Dede corner wide of the post.

Another Dede cross then set up Frei to nod the hosts ahead after 12 minutes.

Oliver Kahn could only stand and watch as the Swiss striker beat Phillip Lahm at the near post to score his seventh goal of the season.

Much of the Dortmund defence stood like statues as Willy Sagnol's free-kick made its way through to van Buyten, who scored the equaliser in the 25th minute.

Hasan Salihamidzic did enough to put Tinga off, leaving the Belgian to get the crucial touch just ahead of Markus Brzenska.

Dortmund's reply came from a Florian Kringe header which Kahn did well to save diving to his right.

But this action did not spur the

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



PHOTO: INTERNET

Borussia Dortmund defender Phillip Degen (L) runs to congratulate an ecstatic Alexander Frei after the Swiss forward had scored against Bayern Munich during their Bundesliga encounter at the Westfalen Stadion in Dortmund on Friday.



PHOTO: AFP

A dejected Maria Sharapova wipes sweat from her face after losing a point during her loss to Serena Williams in the final of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Saturday.

MAESTRO V UNDERDOG Records await Federer



AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer is wary of Fernando Gonzales continuing in his red-hot form as the world number one shoots for his 10th Grand Slam title in Sunday's Australian Open final.

Chile's 10th seed has been in unbelievable touch over his last four matches, blowing away 2005 finalist Lleyton Hewitt, fifth seed American James Blake, world number two Rafael Nadal and triple Australian semi-finalist Tommy Haas.

Federer has breezed through to his 11th slam final without shedding a set and is widely expected to successfully defend his Australian title and carry off his third crown at

Melbourne Park.

But there is the chance that Gonzales, his game restructured by American coach Larry Stefanki, can defy the odds and win his first match against the incomparable Swiss in 10 meetings.

Federer rates Gonzales, armed with one of the fiercest forehands in men's tennis, as a bigger threat than Cypriot surprise package Marcos Baghdatis, who defied his 54th ranking to make last year's Australian final.

Gonzales is projected to climb to at least five on the next rankings by reaching his first Grand Slam final and has won so convincingly against four top-20 opponents that he has earned Federer's respect.

"I'm surprised to see Fernando in the final," Federer said Saturday.

"Not anything against him, but I thought that (Nikolay) Davydenko or Nadal would have come through

in the end. They ended up both losing at the same time."

"I had it last year really. I thought Marcos (Baghdatis) was never going to make the finals. He beat all these great players. I ended up playing against a player that I'm a huge favorite."

"This time around maybe I'm not that big of a favorite because Fernando has a very good ranking, whereas Marcos, he was quite low ranked back then."

"I think it's great to see a new face on a big stage for a change again."

"This year it's Fernando. The only thing is he doesn't have all those great five-setters like Marcos had."

"He just came through and put everybody away right away. I think it's going to be a fun final for sure."

Federer is on the threshold of

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

Kaka's Ronaldo dream

REUTERS, Milan

AC Milan playmaker Kaka has spoken of his excitement at the prospect of being joined at the club by Brazil teammate Ronaldo, who is on the brink of completing a transfer from Real Madrid.

Ronaldo was in Milan on Friday to undergo medical tests. Italian media reported the clubs were settled on a price between seven and seven-and-a-half million euros.

"When he was The Phenomenon, the number one in the world, I was just starting my career in Brazil," Kaka was quoted as saying on Milan's Web site (www.acmilan.com) on Friday.

"So for him to come to Milan now, for us to play for the same club, would be a dream come true."

Ronaldo has been angling to leave Real since team coach Fabio Capello criticised him as being

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5