

Venus clears US Open path to history for Serena

SISTERS SUPREME



Venus gestures after the third round win

New York

Venus Williams eliminated the highest-rated rival in her sister Serena's path to a historic US Open final by defeating 12th-seeded Swiss teen Belinda Bencic 6-3, 6-4 yesterday.

Bencic, who inflicted the most recent defeat upon top-ranked Serena Williams in a Toronto semi-final last month, fell to 0-4 against Venus and has yet to win a set off the seven-time Grand Slam champion.

"I'm really pleased I played a (great) match against someone who had such a great summer," Venus Williams said.

Venus, 35, fired 31 winners against 15 unforced errors while Bencic, 18, had 12 of each.

"I would rather make an error and play aggressive, go for it," Venus said.

Venus Williams advanced to a fourth-round match against either US compatriot Madison Brengle or Estonian qualifier Anett Kontaveit and could face her sister Serena in the quarter-finals.

"I hope we both get to the quarter-finals," Venus said.

Serena Williams, who holds all four Grand Slam titles, continues her quest for more tennis history when she faces 101st-ranked fellow American Bethanie Mattek-Sands later in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The World No. 1

is trying to complete the first calendar Grand Slam since Steffi Graf in 1988 and only the fourth ever

while also seeking her 22nd career Slam singles crown, matching Graf's Open Era record and two shy of Australian Margaret Court's all-time mark.

This could be the first Grand Slam event in which Serena reaches the final without facing a top-10 opponent.

Venus broke Bencic in the eighth game and held on her fourth ace to take the first set in 33 minutes, having blasted 16 winners to only four by Bencic.

Bencic broke for a 3-1 lead when Venus sent a forehand long but Venus responded with a forehand winner to break back in the seventh game and broke again in the ninth before ending matters with her fifth ace.

Meanwhile, Russian 13th seed Ekaterina Makarova ousted Ukraine 17th seed Elina Svitolina 6-3, 7-5 in a matchup of the top-ranked remaining players in their quarter of the draw.

Makarova reached the semifinals of last year's US Open and this year's Australian Open while Svitolina reached her first Slam quarter-final at this year's French Open.

Makarova, playing with a taped upper right leg, began cramping while serving at match point.

After missing two of them, she sat down and asked for a trainer but was told she could not be treated until a changeover, so she fought through the pain to advance on a forehand winner.

"Just at match point it starts cramping," Makarova said.

"I was scared. It's the first time I was cramping.

She told me she can't treat me until the

changeover. I kept playing and kept trying."

A Grand Slam record 12 men have retired from matches at this tournament with two women quitting during matches as well, many from heat-related cramping issues.



Venus might end up facing her sister Serena in the US Open quarterfinals

Belinda Bencic

