

2000 SUMMER OLYMPICS

Sisters double the medals

The Associated Press

SYDNEY, Australia — The Williams' Invitational, also known as Olympic women's tennis, ended with a fittingly ferocious flourish.

On championship point, Venus Williams socked a 115-mph serve. Kristie Boogert somehow managed to return it, so Serena Williams whacked an overhead slam for a winner and the gold medal in doubles.

The sisters dominated in Sydney from start to finish, beating the Dutch team of Boogert and Miriam Oremans in the final Thursday, 6-1, 6-1.

The gold was the second for Venus, who won the singles title Wednesday.

"For me, this is almost bigger than singles," she said. "To have a victory like this with Serena, my sister and best friend, doesn't happen very often."

In fact, they're the first sisters to win a gold in doubles. And Venus is only the second woman to win a gold in singles and doubles, joining American Helen Wills, an Olympian in 1924.

"To be a part of history is really important," Williams said. "To be able to cap an opportunity and succeed is really, really rewarding."

Williams played — and won —

11 matches in 10 days.

"It's been a good 10 days," she said. "I didn't really have any doubts. The only thing I was hoping was that I wouldn't pull any muscles along the way and have to pull out. It was just a matter of how my body was going to last."

The sisters weren't too taxed in the doubles final, which took just 50 minutes. The men's singles final lasted 3 hours, 34 minutes, with Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia outlasting Tommy Haas of Germany 7-6 (7-4), 3-6, 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.

Venus and Serena lost only three points in the first three games, and Oremans double-faulted three times in the seventh game to lose the opening set. Then the Americans raced to a 4-0 lead in the second set.

When Serena lowered the boom with her slam on championship point, the sisters shrieked, flung their rackets in the air and hugged. Holding hands, they waved to the crowd, then skipped happily across the court carrying American flags.

From the medal podium, the sisters beamed during "The Star-Spangled Banner;" Venus closed her eyes through much of the song, savoring the occasion.

"It only lasts one minute, but it's a good time," she said.

"It was a happy moment for me

Wednesday, watching Venus win," Serena said. "It was the same kind of feeling today."

The sisters extended their winning streak in doubles to 22 matches, complementing Venus' 32-match streak in singles. They've won three of the past four Grand Slam doubles tournaments they've played.

"This takes the cake," said Serena, who turned 19 Tuesday. "Every year I can win a Slam. This is every four years, and you never know what's going to happen."

The U.S. men fared poorly at Sydney, winning just one match — their worst Olympic showing since 1912. But American women swept the gold in singles and doubles for the third time in as many Olympics.

The women's tour will get a bit of a break this fall because Venus and Serena plan to return to school and cut back on their tennis schedule. That will raise new doubts about their dedication to the sport.

They have the talent to dominate for years. But do they have the attention span?

"I don't know," U.S. coach Billie Jean King said. "Do they stay injury-free? And what do they really want for their lives?"

In Sydney, at least, the sisters achieved their objectives.

C.J. cheers Jones to Olympic 200 gold

By Steve Wilstein

The Associated Press

SYDNEY, Australia — Stripped of his credential but far from an outcast, C.J. Hunter leapt from his trackside seat, cupped his hands and bellowed into the jittery silence as his wife, Marion Jones, settled into the starting blocks.

It was a cry that sounded like, "Let's fly!" though Hunter smiled when asked exactly what he shouted.

"It's a secret, just between Marion and me," he said. "She knows what I said."

Whatever it was, Jones did indeed fly.

The fastest woman in the world, winner of the 100 last week, Jones sprang from the blocks at the start of the 200 Thursday, bolted into the lead and leaned into the turn a good meter ahead of the field.

"C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon," Hunter kept shouting from his spot 50 meters from the finish line as she separated herself from the pack.

Hunter wasn't accustomed to watching Jones from the stands. Besides being her husband, he's been her personal coach since their days together at North Carolina. He watched her 100 meter race from near the finish line and hugged her after the race in the tunnel leading to the locker room.

But that was when he still wore an athlete's credential around his neck — and before IOC and track federation officials revealed he flunked four drug tests this summer with massive amounts of the anabolic steroid nandrolone in his urine samples.

Hunter, the shot put world champion, pulled out of the Olympics a few days before the opening ceremony, saying his surgically repaired left knee hadn't healed enough to let him compete. But he kept his athlete's badge and stayed at Jones' side, helping her prepare for one of the great challenges in Olympic history — a record five gold medals in the sprints, relays

and women's long jump.

Now, with his credential gone, the 330-pound Hunter came in with a ticket, courtesy of USA Track & Field, and sat five rows up from the track. He wore a blue USA Track & Field cap and sweatshirt. Before and after the race, fans flocked to shake his hand, pose with him for photos and ask for his autograph. Rather than acting like a man disgraced, he seemed like a hero, obliging his admirers.

And Jones, as resolute a runner as ever has appeared in the games, refused to let her husband's troubles get in her way.

"To let one event in your life, as dramatic as it might be, ruin this ... no way," Jones said after the race.

Asked if she feared that people would think she, too, was using drugs to boost her performance, Jones responded:

"No, I don't have that fear, because the people who know me, coach me, train me, know I'm a clean athlete."

U.S. women fall to Norway

The Associated Press

SYDNEY, Australia — As the U.S. women's soccer team assembled behind the silver medal podium, Mia Hamm left her place in line to talk to her teammates.

"She said, 'Hold your head high — and be proud.' And we were, defender Brandi Chastain said. "I think you could see that in everybody's eyes. We're very, very proud of what we accomplished. And I hope everybody who watches the game understands it wasn't easy."

And it wasn't the finish the team or its fans wanted.

In the 12th minute of sudden death overtime, substitute Dagny Mellgren scored to give Norway a 3-2 victory Thursday against the Americans and an Olympic gold

medal. It also gave it the right to claim a spot next to the United States as the top team of the past decade in major international women's soccer.

With the victory, Norway adds the 2000 Olympic title to its 1995 World Cup championship. The United States can claim the 1991 and last year's thrilling World Cup triumph in front of U.S. fans at the Rose Bowl plus the gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

The victory also means Norway is still the only nation with an all-time winning record (15-13-2) against the United States. The Norwegians are also the only team to defeat the Americans in a World Cup or Olympic tournament, the other victory coming in the 1995 World Cup semifinals.

The game was by far the best of the Olympic tournament. The U.S. team took an early lead, lost it just before halftime, then fell behind in the second half before forcing overtime with Tiffeny Milbrett's goal seconds before the end of regulation.

"When the U.S. team scored very early I thought 'No, not again. Why should they win again?'" said Gro Espeseth, who scored Norway's first goal. "It was terrible when Tiffy scored the goal when they were a few seconds from the end. But we came back."

Although these Olympics weren't a cumulative last-hurrah for the stars of the U.S. team, it's likely that the lineup will change substantially before the next major tournament, the 2003 World Cup.

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