

SPORTS

Serena is Female Athlete of Year

(AP)—Serena Williams personifies intensity on a tennis court, right down to her routine for the prematch coin toss.

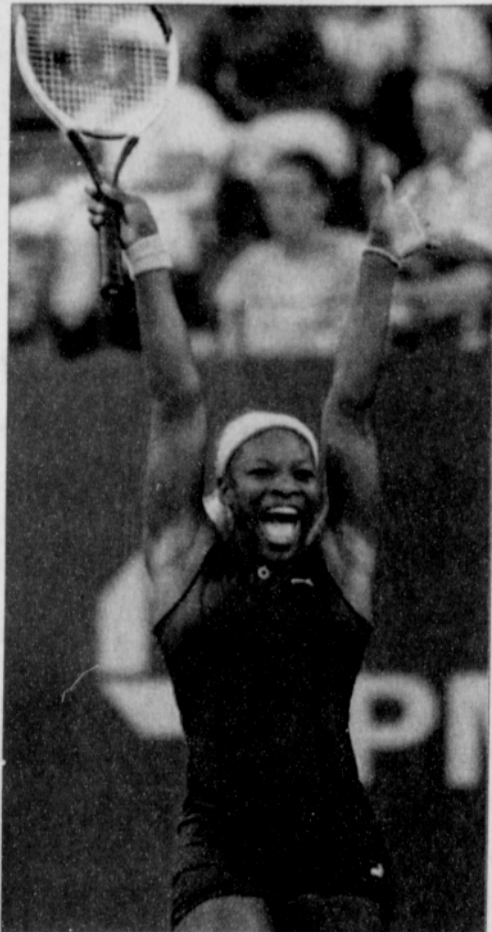
Up at the net, most players are blank canvases, cradling a racket and generally standing still during the formality. Not Williams. She whips her arm in a service motion over and over, her racket slicing the air — Whoosh! Whoosh! — in a display that's akin to shadowboxing during a referee's instructions in a ring.

Bringing that intimidation to every shot on every surface against every opponent (including, finally, her older sister) in 2002, Williams was simply dominant, winning three of the four Grand Slam titles.

On Friday, Williams was honored as The Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year in a vote that was about as close as many of her matches.

She received 53 first-place votes and 351 points from writers and broadcasters across the country. Golfer Annika Sorenstam was next, with 27 first-place votes and 193 points, followed by Olympic champion figure skater Sarah Hughes (12 first-place votes, 158 points).

"I can't become satisfied, because if I get satisfied, I'll be like, 'Oh, I've won Wimbledon, I've won the U.S. Open. Now can I relax,'" Williams said. "But now

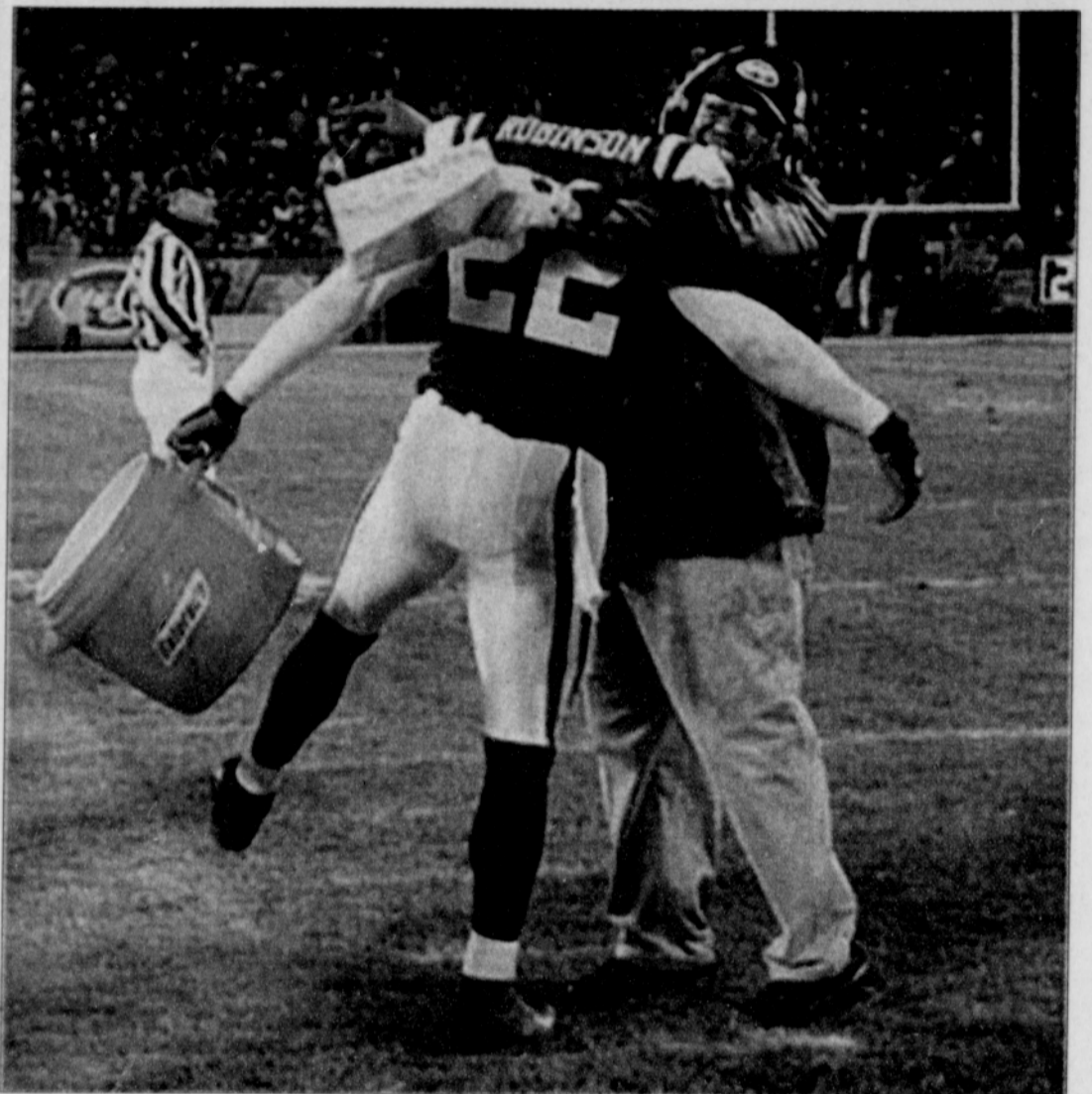


Serena Williams was simply dominant in 2002, winning three of the four Grand Slam titles.

people are really going to be fighting to beat me." It didn't do a lot of good to try to beat her this year.

Williams won 56 of 61 matches (a .918 winning percentage), claimed a WTA Tour-leading eight titles (out of only 13 tournaments played), and took home a record \$3.6 million. She was a runner-up twice and never fared worse than the quarterfinals.

PLAYOFF BOUND



Assistant Coach Mose Rison embraces New York Jets Free Safety Damien Robinson Sunday as the Jets are propelled into the NFL playoffs with a 42-17 victory over the Green Bay Packers. The Jets will face Baltimore in New York on Saturday, Jan. 4. (AP photo)

Pitt Pounces Beavers at Insight Bowl

(AP)—Shawn Robinson became the first Pittsburgh player to return a punt for a touchdown in the school's 22 bowl appearances as the 24th-ranked Panthers beat Oregon State in the Insight Bowl.

Brandon Miree rushed for 111 yards in 20 carries, including a 7-yard touchdown run, to help Pittsburgh to its first nine-win season in 20 years.

The Panthers (9-4) broke a 10-10 tie with a pair of TDs in the third quarter. Tez Morris' interception set up the go-ahead touchdown on Rod Rutherford's 1-yard run, then Robinson broke a pair of tackles en route to his 66-yard punt return to make it 24-10 with 3:26 to go in the third quarter.

Pittsburgh added two more touchdowns in the fourth. The Panthers held Steven Jackson, the Pac-10's leading rusher and fourth in the country with 1,657 yards, to just 34 yards on 19 carries. Jackson had a 60-yard gain called back by a holding penalty. Oregon State was held to 8 yards rushing for the game.

Derek Anderson completed 21 of 44 passes for 318 yards for Oregon State (8-5). James Newson caught 10 for 165 yards for the Beavers, including a remarkable 65-yard touchdown play.



Oregon State's James Newson celebrates after a first half touchdown in the Insight Bowl. (AP photo)

It's often easier to pick out the vehicle . . .

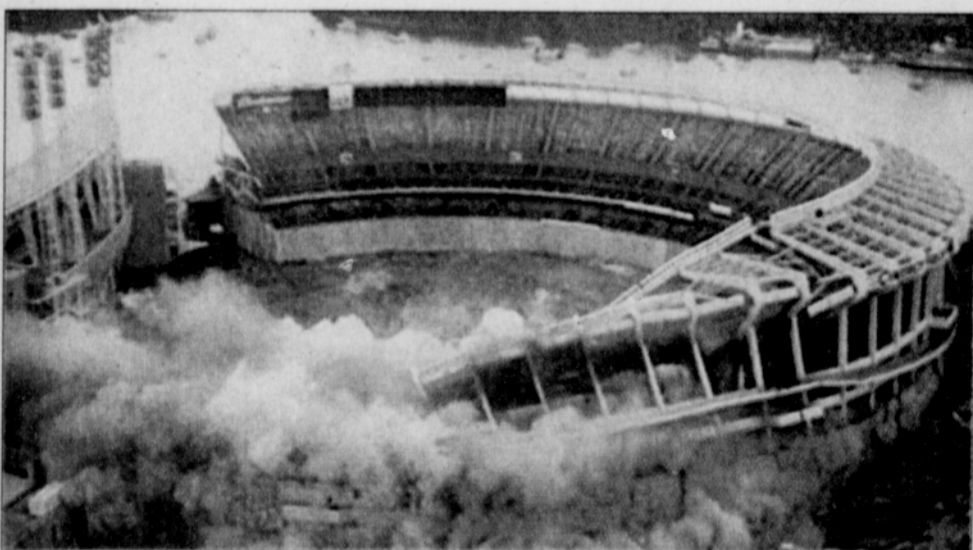
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BLAST TOPPLES RIVERFRONT STADIUM



Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati came down in spectacular fashion Sunday with 1,275 pounds of dynamite and nitroglycerine. The stadium, which first opened in 1970, has been replaced by a new sports venue. (AP photo)

Lakers' Shaq Ties the Knot

(AP)—Shaquille O'Neal married long-time girlfriend Shaunie Nelson in a private ceremony at The Beverly Hills Hotel. The couple exchanged vows Thursday night in front of friends and Los Angeles Lakers teammates at the hotel, where plainclothes security guards began chasing out reporters and photographers during the afternoon.

A television news helicopter captured video of O'Neal standing with his bride as they prepared to take their vows.

"This is a great event for Shaq, I'm really happy for him and his wife and it was a lovely event, so I'm glad I got to attend it," Lakers rookie Kareem Rush told KCAL-TV.

"It was fabulous. It was true to Shaquille's class and grace," said Cheryl Clemons, wife of assistant coach Jim Clemons.

O'Neal and Nelson have two children together and two from prior relationships. They are expecting a boy in May.

FOR WHEN THE CHEESE BALL DROPS.



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