

Tennis

Williams sisters, Federer back in finals

By JOHN PYE
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — It was one, two and three for the ages as Venus and Serena Williams set up another all-sisters final and Roger Federer ensured he'll contend for another Australian Open title.

They're calling it Throwback Thursday at Melbourne Park: three players with a combined age of 106 advanced to the finals.

Six-time Australian Open winner Serena Williams overwhelmed Mirjana Lucic-Baroni 6-2, 6-1 in just 50 minutes in the second of women's semifinals, after Venus Williams beat fellow American CoCo Vandeweghe 6-7 (3), 6-2, 6-3.

The only person standing between 35-year-old Serena Williams and an Open-era record 23rd Grand Slam title is 36-year-old Venus Williams, the oldest player to reach an Australian Open women's final in the modern era. She is the oldest player since Martina Navratilova at Wimbledon in 1994 to reach a women's major final anywhere.

"It felt really good because I felt like it was in my hands to force this Williams final," Serena Williams said. "Believe it or not, I was feeling a little pressure about that, but it felt really good to get that win."

At 35, Federer is the oldest man to reach a Grand Slam final since Ken Rosewall made the 1974 U.S. Open final at the age of 39.

He had a 7-5, 6-3, 1-6, 4-6, 6-3 win in an all-Swiss semifinal against Stan Wawrinka, who has won three majors — the Australian in 2014, the French in 2015 and the U.S. Open last year — in the time since Federer captured the last of his record 17, at Wimbledon in 2012.

Wawrinka broke his racket over his knee in the second set. He needed a medical timeout before the third, came out with his right knee taped, and rallied to force Federer to five for the first time before double-faulting to give up the vital break in the sixth game.

Federer, coming back from six months on the sidelines to rest his injured left knee, made no mistake in closing out. He will next play Sunday against the winner of Friday's semifinal between 14-time major winner Rafael Nadal and Grigor Dimitrov.

"I felt like everything happened so quickly," Federer said. "It feels amazing. I never, ever in my wildest dreams thought I was going to be coming this far here in Australia. It's beautiful."

The women's final on Saturday night will be the first all-Williams final here since 2003, when Serena won what Venus has described as a "battle royale."

Returning to her first final since

then in Melbourne was a momentous occasion for Venus Williams, given her struggles to overcome an energy-sapping illness since being diagnosed with Sjogren's syndrome in 2011. She hasn't been in a Grand Slam final since losing 2009 Wimbledon to Serena.

"Everyone has their moment in the sun," she said. "Maybe mine has gone on a while. I'd like to keep that going. I've got nothing else to do so let's keep it going."

She was exuberant after clinching her win Vandeweghe on her fourth match point, putting hands up to her face, almost in disbelief, before crossing her arms over her heart. She then did a stylish pirouette on the court, smiling broadly, as the crowd gave her a standing ovation.

Serena Williams' celebration was more subdued after her lopsided win over 34-year-old Lucic-Baroni, who was playing her first semifinal at a major since Wimbledon in 1999. There was a warm embrace for the woman she'd played only twice before — both times in 1998.

Of all the comeback stories in the tournament, Lucic-Baroni's return to the top level after so much time struggling out of the game has captured the most heartfelt attention. After finishing the semifinal — notable for the record combined ages of the players at a major — Lucic-Baroni took a selfie with her cell phone on the

court before waving and leaving Rod Laver Arena.

Serena Williams said Lucic-Baroni's comeback served as an inspiration for other players. Her own sister has also been an inspiration.

"Obviously I was really proud of Venus — a total inspiration, my big sister," Serena said. "She's basically my world and my life. I was so happy for her. For us both to be in the final is the biggest dream come true for us."

Venus Williams has won seven major titles, but none since Wimbledon in 2008. Her seven-and-a-half year gap between major finals is the longest for any player in the Open era. She's also lost six of the eight Grand Slam finals she's played against Serena, and is 11-16 in their career meetings at four-level.

The 25-year-old Vandeweghe, playing her maiden Grand Slam semifinal, was the first player to take a set off Venus Williams in the tournament, but then had her serve broken four times.

Venus Williams said she'd take a winning attitude into the final against her sister, and had nothing to lose.

"She's my toughest opponent — nobody has ever beaten me as much as Venus has," Serena Williams acknowledged. But, "I just feel like no matter what happens, we've won ... a Williams is going to win this tournament."

Men's College Basketball

Beard's career night paces Owls

East Oregonian

KLAMATH FALLS — Led by the double-double of senior post Bryan Beard, the Oregon Tech men's basketball team rolled to a 106-85 win over Multnomah on Thursday night.



Beard

Beard, a 2012 Pendleton High graduate, finished with a career-high 21 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Hustlin' Owls (17-6, 10-3 CCC), which lead Eastern Oregon by one game for second place in the Cascade Collegiate Conference.

Oregon Tech used a 17-7 run in the first half to take a 31-14 lead by the midway point. The Owls hit 60 percent of their shots in the first half and led 61-35 at halftime.

Beard shot 10 for 12 (83.3 percent) from the field and hit OIT's first basket in the game and the Owls never trailed. Thirteen of his points came in the second half, and six of his rebounds were within the first two minutes after halftime.

Oregon Tech's next game is Saturday when it hosts Warner Pacific at 3 p.m.

BULLDOGS: Ortiz, Andreason big off the bench

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"We were just bad on defense, honestly," Hermiston senior Xavier Rambo said of the first half effort. "They were getting wide open looks and we really didn't do anything about it. But we had a talk in the break to keep our hands up and don't let off, do the simple things we weren't doing in the first half and it worked."

Rambo was a big factor for Hermiston's offense in the first half, scoring 16 of his game-high 21 points there. The Eagles defense was slow to keep track of the quick six-footer, as Rambo hung out in the middle of Hood River's zone defense at the free throw line and turned several entry passes into easy floaters and lay-ins.

Hermiston (12-4, 2-0 CRC) also had to overcome a poor performance in the rebounding department, as Hood River earned numerous second-chance points and scoring opportunities because of offensive rebounds. The Bulldogs were at a bit of a height disadvantage as Hood River (5-9, 0-2) deployed six players at least 6-feet tall on Thursday, including a pair of 6-6 players, while Hermiston has just three.

But head coach Casey Arstein said that the disadvantage isn't an excuse, as he said his team simply did not

box out well enough.

"We've been struggling with it all year, but we need to do a better job of boxing out and not just watching the ball," Arstein said. "At times it was one of those games where the ball came off the rim and we were trying to jump with them instead of boxing them out, we've just gotta work on it."

Holding a 36-30 lead at the halftime break, Hermiston came out in the third quarter with some fresh legs and a renewed intensity on both ends of the floor. The Bulldogs shot 7-12 (58 percent) from the floor in the third quarter and then held Hood River to 5-11 (45 percent) to grow their lead to 10 points at 55-45 to end the third.

Hermiston bench players played a big factor in the third and fourth quarters on Thursday, stepping in for starters Andrew James, Hunter, Walls, and Thomas McCullough who all had four fouls midway through the half. Two players that really stepped up were sophomores Cesar Ortiz and Ryne Andreason as each player chipped in two made 3-pointers and seven points.

Andreason only recently came back to play after missing approximately six weeks due to a fractured wrist, and Arstein said he was really impressed with how Andreason played.

"I was really proud of Ryne," Arstein said. "He's one of the smartest kids in the program, basketball IQ-wise and he has a great looking shot. He had a good summer and I thought he might make a good role player for us this year and he showed it with a good night tonight."

"And same with Cesar, he played really smart, didn't do anything to really hurt us, and hit some big shots."

In the fourth quarter, Hood River gave the Bulldogs all they had to get back in it. The Eagles pressured the Bulldogs with a half-court, trap zone defense, not allowing Hermiston very many open looks at the basket. In fact, Hermiston only attempted six shots from the floor in that fourth quarter compared to Hood River's 13.

But where Hermiston was able to hold off the Eagles was at the free throw line, as the Bulldogs went 9-14 from the line in the fourth quarter. Andrew James and Jordan Ramirez had the bulk of those attempts as James went 4-6 and Ramirez went 3-4. James finished the game with 18 points and Ramirez also got into double figures with 11.

Hood River was led by JJ Mears with 20 points — with nine of those coming in the fourth quarter — and Dakota Kurahara had 16.

"I'll give it up to Hood River," Arstein said. "They played hard and they played

well and tried to bully us inside and we'll have to do a better job next time, but I'll take the win."

SCARY MOMENT

One play from Thursday's game left Bulldog fans and players feeling nervous. With 3:46 left in the third quarter, Xavier Rambo fell hard to the floor after getting undercut by a Hood River defender on a fast-break lay-in attempt. When Rambo fell, he appeared to hit the back of his head and neck area on the floor, and instantly was in obvious pain, resulting in the Dawg House falling silent.

After staying down for approximately one minute, Rambo got up and walked off the court under his own power.

"I was kind of scared because I thought it might be my second concussion this year," Rambo said afterward.

Rambo said that he went through several concussion protocol tests with the team trainer and was cleared, and came back to play the entire fourth quarter.

UP NEXT: Hermiston heads east to take on Pendleton on Tuesday evening.

HRV	19	12	15	16	—	61
HHS	17	19	19	14	—	69
HOOD RIVER — JJ Mears 20, D. Kurahara 16, E. Siekkinen 7, T. Hough 7, M. Williams 4, T. Wells 2, Z. Moore 1.						
HERMISTON — X. Rambo 21, A. James 18, J. Ramirez 11, C. Ortiz 7, R. Andreason 7, H. Walls 3, K. Moss 2, T. McCullough, A. Earl, P. Wicks.						
3-pointers — HRV 6, HHS 8. Free throws — HRV 8-15, HHS 17-32. Fouls — HRV 22, HHS 17. Fouled out — H. Walls (HHS).						

DAWGS: Next up is rivalry game at Pendleton on Tuesday

Continued from 1B

already got a pretty high basketball IQ so it's all about getting used to the speed," he said. "She's doing a really good job running the offense from the point."

Raleigh Andreason added nine points and Jordan Thomas chipped in eight for the Bulldogs.

Hood River (6-6, 0-2) was led by Emily Curtis with seven points, and the Eagles trailed 28-11 at halftime.

It was the second win this week for the Bulldogs, which started with a win over The Dalles 53-36 on Monday before dropping a non-league billing to Sunnyside (WA) 48-43.

"I thought the girls played well," Rodriguez said. "It's our third game in four nights so I was a little worried about that. We were expecting a dog fight and I think our girls came out and put any hope of them giving us that fight out of their minds pretty early."

Hermiston's next game is Tuesday when it plays at

Pendleton with tip-off scheduled for 5:45 p.m.

HHS	13	15	10	17	—	55
HRV	6	5	9	5	—	25
HERMISTON — J. Romero 11, M. Juul 11, R. Andreason 9, J. Thomas 8, K. Padilla 6, H. Meyers 6, S. Stefani 2, S. Gilbert 2, C. Wheeler, H. Thompson, M. Wilson, R. Meyers.						
HOOD RIVER — E. Curtis 7, N. Lopez 4, A. Goodman 4, L. Orr 4, H. McNerney 3, L. Weekly 2, A. Kinoshita 1, H. Baker, B. Frazier, B. Idhe.						
3-pointers — HHS 2; HRV 1. Free throws — HHS 5-8; HRV 6-8. Fouls — HHS 8; HRV 9.						

HILLMICK: Summer ball helps get attention of coaches

Continued from 1B

said. "When I get done with athletics I still want to spend time around sports."

Thanks in part to the quality care she's received over the years, however, that isn't looking like will be anytime soon and on Wednesday night Hillmick signed her National Letter of Intent to play softball at Willamette University.

A three-sport varsity athlete for the TigerScots who also plays volleyball and basketball, Hillmick said softball has always been her favorite sport.

"I have two older brothers who played baseball so I was just around that kind of sport," she said. "I played volleyball, soccer and basketball also, but just being out on the diamond made me happy and it was a sport that

I wanted to put that much work into.

"I have been playing softball since I was seven and that is when I first fell in love with the game. Since then I knew I wanted to play college softball and I made that my goal."

Through her summer ASA teams and then later playing in Northwest Fastpitch tournaments, Hillmick was able to showcase her skills to coaches throughout the northwest, and was drawing interest from more than a handful of other programs including Utah State, George Fox and Pacific among others.

"I've been playing ASA since I was nine and so playing ASA and traveling all over the place, and I've gotten to play some tournaments in Colorado and Utah. I've gotten to see coaches all

over the place," she said. "I feel like that's what had got me the most looks."

"I had a lot of schools looking at me, in the end I was choosing between George Fox and Willamette as my top two choices but Willamette was always my first choice. Once I first stepped on campus, I knew that this was the place that I belonged."

Hillmick, who was recruited as a middle infielder and pitcher, said Willamette head coach Damian Williams, the trees on campus and the town of Salem were all big factors in her choosing the Bearcats, which compete at the NCAA Div. III level.

"I picked Willamette because I felt that it was the right fit for me. The coach is awesome, the campus is

beautiful, and the education is better than anything I could ever ask for," she said.

With her future plans in place, Hillmick said she's just looking to get as much enjoyment out of her time remaining as a TigerScot.

"I just want to go out and have fun with my teammates and have a good winning season and finish out high school with good memories," she said. "I would like to thank Jeff Griggs, Rollie Marshall, my parents, all of my friends, and everyone at Weston-McEwen High School for everything they have done for me to help me get where I am today. I couldn't have done it without them!"

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Athlete of the Week

Twenty questions with Pendleton's Jon Jennings

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton High senior Jon Jennings has brought back multiple wins from each of the Buckaroos' swim meets this season. On Saturday, Jan. 21, he was first in the 100-yard breaststroke and butterfly, and also swam for the first-place 400-yard freestyle relay team at the Hood River meet. He has been named the East Oregonian Athlete of the Week for the week of Jan. 15-21.

EO: What was the first sport you played?

JJ: It would probably have to be soccer.

What is the most difficult thing about swimming?

The technique, all the mechanics.

That's your favorite swimming stroke?

Freestyle

What's your best memory in the pool?

Being able to swim with my brother Nick in his last race of his high school year.

Who is your favorite athlete?

Michael Phelps

If you could attend any sporting event what would it be?

Totally the Olympics.

What are your hobbies outside of sports?

I like going and shooting with my brothers and hunting.

Where's your favorite place in Oregon?

The Eagle Caves

What's your favorite kind of cake?

Ice cream cake

What's your favorite animated movie?

Megamind (2010)

What's the best thing served in the PHS cafeteria?

The chicken sandwich

What's your favorite restaurant?

Olive Garden

What's the best gift you ever received?

My mom got me a new shotgun for Christmas this year.

What's your favorite subject in school?

Physics

Are you a member of any other school groups/clubs?

National Honor Society

What are your plans for after high school?

I'm going to go on my mission with my church.

What's the most interesting thing you've learned this school year?

How small we are in the universe.

What's your favorite wintertime activity?

Driving around in the snow.

What's your favorite sandwich topping?

Pickles

Who's your favorite US President?

I've got to say Trump.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Jon Jennings

Pendleton Senior Swimmer

Jennings earned first place in the 100 yard butterfly (56.62), 100 yard backstroke (57.24) and anchored the first place 400 yard relay team while his Pendleton boys team took second at the Hood River swim meet on Saturday.

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