

HAMPTONS

AUGUST 20-26

SERENA WILLIAMS

Dangerous Curves Ignite the Beach

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Highlights from The Hampton Classic:
The Blue Parrot's Stephanie Bongiovi
Mary Giullani Entertains Alfresco
Equestrian Sensation Georgina Bloomberg

ABRIDGED GUIDE TO
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Styling by Amanda Weiner
Hair by Angela Meadows
Makeup by Natasha Gross
Photographed on location at
The Surf Club, Miami

Jasmine dress, **Lisa Marie
Fernandez** (\$425), Harrods,
27 Mark St., Cent Hampden;
Inkmonksw.com. Ring,
Williams' own.

Accessories: Hat, **DKNY** (\$64),
Macy's, 130 W. Mondak Hwy.,
Hampton Bay; macy.com.
Michael bottom, **Perry Ellis** (\$46),
Tanger Outlets at the Archer, Deer
Park; perryellis.com



"I always said winning all those Grand Slams was a dream, but when I opened my school in Kenya, that was the best feeling in the world because I was helping people who had almost nothing."

"Everyone who knows me knows I'm always the life of the party and the joker," Williams says. "It was fun to do the Tampax ad because people got to see that side of me. When I'm on the court, people don't get to see that I'm not one of the most serious people in the world." (Her sense of humor about being the first active pro female athlete to appear in a feminine hygiene ad is completely spot-on: "Tampax, I love them. They're the world's best invention.")

Williams isn't afraid to turn her deep, throaty laugh around on herself, especially when she looks back at some of the more outrageous decisions she's made outfit-wise both on and off the court. "I like to look back at everything and be like, 'Damn, I wore that and I don't regret it.' I'm the first person to make fun of myself and say, 'What I wore was hideous; what was I thinking?' One day I can tell my kids, 'Mom was a hot mess!'"

That said, her next project will be behind the camera. Williams, who was raised a Jehovah's Witness, believes there's a lack of morals and positivity on television these days—a hole she's hoping to fill as a producer of several reality television programs with an affirmative bent. "I just want to promote some good things and stay positive," says the 31-year-old US Open champ.

That ideal seeps into charity work as well, including a school-building project in Maitoti, Kenya, a three-hour drive outside the capital, Nairobi. She has already built two schools in the impoverished area that has no running water and a desperate need for other basic services. She hopes to build another one within the next year. "It was the best thing I've ever done," says Williams. "I always said winning all those Grand Slams was a dream, but when I opened my school in Kenya, that was the best feeling in the world because I was helping people who had almost nothing."

Her most recent school contains special services for children who are hearing-impaired, a segment of the population that's routinely ignored and abused in Africa. "We gave them computers donated by Hewlett-Packard, and one of the kids came up to me crying and said, 'Now I can finally tell everyone what's on my mind,'" Williams remembers.

The little boy, who has probably never watched a tennis match in his life, looked up to Williams the way millions of young girls around the world do—as a role model, a position she accepts with the utmost responsibility. "I feel like my job, more than anything, is to be a good Christian," she says. "I've been known to make mistakes and because I do live in the public eye, it can be hard, but I'm living my life as best I can." H

LOVE ALL

She is one of the most accomplished women's tennis players of all time. But lately, Serena Williams has been focusing on several off-court pursuits.

BY JO PIAZZA PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILLY COLEMAN

SERENA WILLIAMS HASN'T HAD A CHANCE to take a breather since her professional debut in 1995. Lately, it seems the tennis star is always busy doing something: winning tournaments, building schools in Kenya or guest-starring on television shows. So while the surgery on her right foot that had her spending most of the summer recovering was unfortunate, she admits it also gave her some much-needed time to relax.

"I can actually use the recovery time," Williams says. "I'm so active trying to produce television shows now, writing and playing tennis—and on top of that, winning Grand Slams—that it's good for me to just have some time off. At first I dreaded it, but I'm sleeping a lot, which is good, and I'm being babied."

Confident that she'll be fully recovered by the fall, Williams, 28, has used the respite to establish a time frame for all the things she wants to accomplish off the court. "A year from now, I see myself trying to compete and win Grand Slams, but maybe not playing such a full schedule so I can focus on the other things in my life, like doing more in show business," she says.

Williams is already becoming an old hand in the entertainment business: She has guest-starred on *ER* and *Law & Order* and done voice-over work for several animated series. Last year she starred in a hilariously irreverent commercial for Tampax, in which she argues with Mother Nature about the "bad blood" between them. The spoof allowed Serena's hair to finally see something she hadn't been able to show case on the tennis court—her sense of humor.



Jeamine dress,
Lisa Marie
Fernandez (S&S),
Inkwell, 57 Main St.,
East Hampton;
inkwellonline.com