

Serena Into Last 16 of Australian Open
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By Craig Gabriel

MELBOURNE: Serena Williams has taken another giant step towards defending her Australian Open title. She took one hour and twelve minutes to get past the 18 year old Belarussian player Victoria Azarenka 6-3, 6-4.

The highlight of Serena's game in this match was her serve. She had a respectable 64% of first serves in play and out of those she won a tremendous 89%. Adding to that she powered down 15 aces, which if you add up in points, she ended up getting almost four free games.

Continuing with the statistics in the match, she won two of the four break points she had and never lost her serve once. Serena struck 29 winners which was almost three times the number of winners had by Azarenka.

It was in the eighth game of the first set and on the 52nd point of the match that Serena broke serve and she was able to serve it out and take the advantage a game later. In the second set, during the fifth game Serena applied the pressure once again as Azarenka tried to defend her bases. It was to no avail and on point 88 the second service break was secured.

"I think it was definitely a match to be serious for; she's a good player," said Serena. "I definitely served well today. It was much better than what I did my other two rounds, so it's looking good. I like it."

Serena thought Azarenka played well off the ground and she moved well and she hit the ball with a fair amount of pace.

After the singles Serena was back on court, this time in the doubles with Venus and they faced the second seed Katarina Srebotnik and Ai Sugiyama and in stunning fashion they upset the second seeds 6-2, 7-6.

"I love playing doubles with V," said Serena. "It's like playing with a guy because she has a great serve. She hits these hard balls. I just stand and look like an All American. It's pretty cool."

"We kind of just do our own thing on the court; sometimes I'll tell her like to look for this and stuff, look for that."

The girls have always been a tremendous doubles combination. They have won women's doubles titles at the Australian Open, Wimbledon and the US Open and the other teams know that and they are taking things as seriously as their singles. They now slip into the place of the second seeds in the draw.

Serena now faces Nicole Pietrangeli in the fourth round which is the start of the second week. The 18 year old from the Czech Republic is seeded twelve and she beat Sugiyama 6-3, 6-4.

"I actually think (Azarenka and Pietrangeli) both play a like. Obviously Pietrangeli has played more maybe in her career and done a little better, but I think they both have similar games. Pietrangeli has a really big serve. She uses that to her advantage," said Serena.