

Serena Marches Into The Last 8
Sunday, 20 January 2008
By Craig Gabriel

MELBOURNE: Serena Williams has moved into the quarter finals of the Australian Open for the fifth time and the 22nd time overall at Grand Slams. This is where the business end of the tournament begins and she got there by beating Nicole Pietrangeli of the Czech Republic 63 64 in one hour 13 minutes.

This was the fourth meeting between Serena and Pietrangeli and it's the fourth time Serena has won. The previous three matches were all last year including one in the semifinals of the Australian Open which was also a straight set victory.

"I felt like I didn't have a lot of rhythm out there," said Serena. "I felt like lazy, like I wasn't moving the way I wanted to. But overall, I think it boiled down to serves and returns.

On the statistical side of things Serena didn't serve as well as she did in the previous round. She hit just nine aces compared to 15 against Victoria Azarenka, but she still won 88% of first serve points. In the department of winners she had 23 of them and came to the net six times winning four of the points.

Serena faced four break points but only surrendered one of them. One of the big factors was that Pietrangeli made far too many errors in the match, 25 of them. It was in the eighth game of the first set that Serena was able to break serve for the first time. She did it again in the fifth game of the second set only to hand back the break in the eighth game.

Then, with Pietrangeli serving in the ninth game, the longest of the match, Serena broke once again and served out the match.

"It's definitely interesting playing her. Because she's so unpredictable," said Serena. "I think that's really a good thing. Last couple of times I played her, her serve has just been really, really, really good."

Serena said her aim for the next round is to move better and make fewer errors. She wants to keep her error tally down to the low levels she had in the second round.

In the quarter finals Serena will play either third seed Jelena Jankovic or young Aussie Casey Dellacqua.