

Serena Reaches Sixth Miami Final
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By Craig Gabriel

MIAMI: Defending champion Serena Williams found something deep inside her psyche and that is what secured her a place in the final of the Sony Ericsson Open for the sixth time and the chance to chase down a record equalling fifth title at the Crandon Park Tennis Center.

In a really good match that could have gone either way, Serena came back to beat Svetlana Kuznetsova in a marathon two hours and 47 minutes, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3.

"It's always good to come out on top (but) I think I was a little disappointed by the way that I played, but I'm just moving on," said Serena.

Kuznetsova got off to a quick start but at 4-1 in the first set to the Russian the trainer was called to the court to attend to Serena. She was getting treatment on her lower back and she really did look concerned. There was further attention paid to the back at the next change of ends as Serena persevered.

"The physio came out and I started to feel better right away after she treated me," said Serena. "The first time I felt a lot better and each time she came out it kept getting better. I just got stuck. It was just completely out of the blue, but it got better."

In the opening game of the second set Kuznetsova had two break points but they were saved by Serena. The set went with serve for eleven games as Serena lead 6-5. Kuznetsova served to stay in the set but when she was break point/set point down she dumped a rudimentary forehand volley into the net. A fist clenching Serena knew she was totally back in the match.

The first four games of the final set were breaks with Kuznetsova scoring the first one after Serena struck two double faults. Serena held serve for 3-2 and in the seventh game powered down a hat-trick of aces. A game later the competition between the two ladies went up another level as Kuznetsova battled hard to hold serve but on break point four got the advantage.

She served for a place in the final but had to stave off two break points. She hit ace 13 to bring up match point and on the next point victory landed on her racquet strings.

"I think it was about being mentally tough and making the right shots at the right time and just never giving up," said Serena. "I played a really good opponent who has been down several match points in this tournament already, so I knew going in she wasn't just going to give it to me."

In the final Serena will play either Jelena Jankovic or Vera Zvonareva. At the time of writing that match had not taken to the court.

"I think I've played a great tournament and I'm just happy to still be in it and doing the best I can do," said Serena. "As long as I'm doing the right thing on court, I feel like I can come out on top, but I just have to make sure I'm doing what's right."