

Serena Wins No. 5
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By Craig Gabriel

MIAMI: It was a dramatic final that swayed like the palm trees that were being blown by the sea breezes coming off Biscayne Bay, but in the end it was a record equaling title to Serena Williams at the Sony Ericsson Open.

Serena clinched the crown for a fifth time, leveling the record set by Steffi Graf in 1996, when she beat Jelena Jankovic 6-1, 5-7, 6-3 in two hours 25 minutes.

"I feel really comfortable here and I've been trying to feel this comfortable at the US Open and Wimbledon which I'm bound to do," said Serena. "I'm right on schedule to feel comfortable there too.

"I have so many friends here and it's like playing at home and the crowd is always really happy and they're rooting, so it's a good feeling."

The final was heading towards becoming the most one sided final since 2004 when Serena beat Elena Dementieva 6-1, 6-1. She had taken nine of the first ten games and was up a set and 3-0, but Jankovic started to pick up her level of play and she got herself back in the match.

The crowd was getting behind the Serb player, not because they were against Serena but because they wanted to see more of a match. Serena had been dominating so incredibly well. The support obviously helped because Jankovic leveled the final, but then after losing serve in the first game of the final set, Jankovic called for the trainer saying she was having trouble breathing.

She was given some treatment however Serena went on a tear of games which had her leading 5-0. The set suddenly got tense. The excitement was at fever pitch as Jankovic picked up three games but then with Jankovic serving once again in an effort to stay in the match, Serena gritted her teeth.

For the eighth time she had match point and this time she made no mistake as she smashed the ball away for a winner to clinch her fifth title.

"I thought I had like 15 match points," she said laughing. "I'm glad to know it wasn't. I really thought I had 15. A couple of shots she hit really well, and then a couple of times I made some mistakes and I was just like, it was just weird.

She admitted that she got a bit tight in the match but that is a pure indication of her desire level, her quest to win and how much that means to her.

"I feel like all I want to do is play tennis, and all I want to do is to be the best and win," said Serena. "My whole life is dedicated to nothing but tennis. I've been working so hard and I feel like everything will come together in time.

"The fact that it did in the final, I feel like you can definitely see my desire and my dedication."

CONGRATULATIONS SERENA!