



Geoff Burke-Imagn Images

Venus Williams waves to the crowd after her match against Magdalena Frech in a women's singles match on day four of the Mubadala Citi DC Open at Rock Creek Park Tennis Center on July 24 in Washington, D.C.

Venus Williams on '26 plans: Shouldn't 'ever rule me out'

Field Level Media

Anyone who watched Venus Williams compete on the WTA Tour over the past three decades had to come away with at least one immutable truth. She is a fighter.

Many of the tennis pundits and even Venus' most ardent supporters had to believe that the 2024 Miami Open would be her final hurrah. Her latest -- and most serious health issues -- surely would lead the seven-time Grand Slam champion to put the racquets in the closet.

But not so fast. Williams earned a wild-card entry to the Citi Open in Washington, D.C. last month and knocked off 35th-ranked Peyton Stearns. Williams, 45, became the oldest player to earn a WTA singles victory since Martina Navratilova won a match at Wimbledon in 2004 as a 47-year-old.

She would lose in the next round to Magdalena Frech, but proved to herself that 45 is just a number.

"There's one thing that I know: You're never too young or too old to win or lose," Williams said as she prepares to compete in the WTA 1000 event in Cincinnati. "Winning and losing knows no age. All

that matters is that I'm prepared and ready. And the longer I play, the more I get into it, the more I train, the better I get."

One year ago, Williams, who was diagnosed with Sjogren's syndrome in 2011, fought a more serious health battle. She underwent surgery to remove fibroids and a large focal adenomyoma that was embedded in the muscle of her uterus.

She posted this on Instagram recently: "I was told I was inoperable. I was told I could bleed to death on the table. I was told to get a surrogate and forget the hope to carry my own children. I was misdiagnosed. I went untreated for years and years and years. It's so important to advocate for your health! I suffered from severe anemia, debilitating pain, excessive bleeding and abnormally frequent menstrual cycles for many years. It affected my tennis and the trajectory of my career."

I told my story so other women don't have to go through this and so they can get better sooner."

The road to recovery was slow, but returning to the courts never left her thoughts.

"At the end of the day, you have to live your life on your own terms," Wil-

iams said, as she prepares for an opening-round match against Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro. "Your terms should be yours. It doesn't matter what anyone else says or what anyone else thinks. If you get to live life on your own terms, that's a life well-lived, and I firmly believe in that.

"And I do what I do be-

cause I want to live life the way I want to, unapologetically, with no regrets and on my terms. ... Make your terms and don't surrender."

After Cincinnati, Venus will compete in the 2025 US Open, partnering with Reilly Opelka in the new mixed doubles format and, hopefully, earning a wild-card entry into singles competition.

Canadian teen Mboko wins WTA title in Montreal

Field Level Media

Canadian 18-year-old Victoria Mboko completed a Cinderella run at the National Bank Open, defeating Japanese star Naomi Osaka 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 on Thursday night to capture the WTA 1000 title in Montreal.

Mboko became the third Canadian woman to win her national open following Faye Urban (1969) and Bianca Andreescu (2019). Mboko won her first WTA title of any kind and will rocket to No. 25 in the world rankings next week.

When Osaka gave her the match-winning point by hitting a back-handed shot into the net, Mboko dropped her racquet and went to her knees while covering her face.

"It's been an incredible week here in Montreal," Mboko said. "... I also want to thank Naomi for an incredible match. I've always looked up to her when I was really little, so it's always great to play with an amazing player like you."

Mboko's stunning tournament was highlighted by a straight-sets upset of No. 1 seed Coco Gauff in the Round of 16. She also took down No. 9 seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan in the semifinals, rallying from a set down

just as she did in the final.

Osaka controlled the first set Thursday, winning the first three games and never facing a break point. Then came a topsy-turvy second set in which the returning player broke the server in each of the first five games, resulting in a 3-2 Mboko lead.

Mboko won a service game and broke Osaka again for a 5-2 lead en route to evening the match. After each woman broke the other to start the third set, Mboko ran the table by claiming the final five games.

The championship match featured 14 service breaks, more than half of the 25 total games.

That's where Mboko found her advantage, as she converted 8 of 9 opportunities to break Osaka's serve while saving 7 of 13 break points herself.

Cincinnati Open: Jessica Bouzas Maneiro of Spain defeated Venus Williams 6-4, 6-4 in the opening round in Mason, Ohio.

Williams, 45, was in the field as a wild card as she continues her return to competitive tennis after more than a year away. Her next planned appearance will be in the U.S. Open mixed doubles draw with Reilly Opelka.

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