

Venus

(Continued from Page 12) Williams took it to Bartoli, going ahead 3-0. But Bartoli, who upset No. 3 Jelena Jankovic in the fourth round and No. 1 Justine Henin in the semifinals, made things interesting by breaking back with the help of a double-fault and two groundstroke errors by Williams.

After 37 minutes, things were even at 4-4. But Williams held at love, then broke to end the first set with a swinging backhand volley.

That pretty much ended the competitive portion of the proceedings.

Perhaps because the sun finally emerged from the clouds and the temperature was suddenly in the 70s — ball kids held umbrellas at changeovers to provide shade — both finalists needed medical timeouts with Williams up 3-0 in the second set.

Bartoli had her left foot treated, while Williams got down on the court to have her left leg worked on. The American played the rest of the way with a thick bandage under her white spandex shorts, which she began wearing in the second round because the skirt she planned to use was too big.

"She's a fighter," said her close friend, golfer Hank Kuehne. "She's one of those people that definitely has the ability to elevate her game. ...If that's on one leg, then she's going to do that."

Williams was playing in her 12th Grand Slam final, sixth at the All England Club, and winning her sixth major title. Bartoli was in her sixth tournament final and never before had been beyond the fourth round at a major.

"You walk into that court," she said, "and you know you're a part of history."

When they walked off that court, the one Williams knows so well, they passed the board that lists the past champions. Already stenciled in, below similar entries for 2000, 2001 and 2005, was Williams' name, next to 2007. Clutching a bouquet of flowers, Williams stared at it, her mouth agape.

At about that time, her father was recalling that when Venus was 9, she would talk about how many Wimbledon titles she wanted to win one day.

"I think she can win three more," Richard Williams said, "and I would be disappointed if she didn't."

At this point, who would doubt it?

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ADA/EO/AA Employer

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