
Justine Henin retires

Posted by Hofzinsler - 14-05-2008 15:37

That's a bit of a shock. You'd think she'd at least have wanted another crack at the French Open.

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by King Mob - 14-05-2008 15:53

Bizarre, this. I saw the headline on the BBC site and clicked through, to find out who this 'Henin' was.

World number one, eh. When was the last time I watched a game of tennis?

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by ursus arctos - 14-05-2008 16:56

It's quite sad.

I fear that women's tennis is going to go the way of gymnastics and figure skating, with participant's careers at the highest levels essentially ending at age 25.

That isn't healthy; nor is playing a full tour schedule at 16 (especially if you've spent the previous 8 years with Bolletieri or one of his competitors).

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 14-05-2008 17:33

I always find it somewhat refreshing when a great athlete realizes there is more to life than sports.

For the world number 1 to burn out at age 25 is sad, but at least she's getting out while she's still young and still has lots of energy, rather than when she's physically broken down and suddenly realises that her whole life has been about whacking a little yellow ball and has missed out on so much else.

Annika Sorenstam could play another 15 years, I'd imagine, but has decided to get on with life. Good for her.

In the big team sports, fans tend to mock or demonize great prospects who turn out to be "busts" because they didn't have enough "passion" or "work hard enough."

But in a lot of these cases, the player simply decided that he was no longer all that interested in football/baseball/basketball/hockey. The example that comes to mind is Andre Johnson, a great offensive lineman for Penn State who was drafted high by the Redskins but never played in a real game. According to Joe Paterno, he just really wasn't all that into football, but because he was massive and quick, he used it to get a college scholarship. Courtney Brown was a bit like that too. He's a monster, but he never did much in the NFL because of injuries and, I think, he just didn't love it. He has other interests. The day after the Browns drafted him and gave him a zillion dollars, he was back on campus finishing his final exams for his degree in "integrated media" (web design).

Who can blame them? As fans, we love these games, but most of us don't spend every waking hour training for or obsessing over them like they do.

I like watching sports and appreciate the athleticism, but I also recognize that most of the people doing it are the sort that focus their entire lives on that one thing. I don't want to be that sort of person, I don't think I'd want my kids (if I had them) to be those sorts of people, so I certainly can't blame anyone else for deciding they don't want to be that sort anymore.

I think about this sometimes. I wasn't a great athlete as a kid, but I imagine that if I'd really worked at it, I probably could have been decent at something at the high school level, at least. There was a time a while ago, when I regretted not doing that, and sometimes, I've wished that I could have been some kind of superstar and played in college and maybe pro and all of that. Everyone fantasizes about that sometimes I suppose.

But then when I think about it some more, other than the money and the girls and the free team gear (I love free team gear), it doesn't appeal that much.

The jocks I knew in high school and college were, for the most part, not the sort of guys I like to hang out with. In high school, a lot of the jocks were just utter assholes. which is ultimately why I ended up becoming a band geek instead of going out for football. I wasn't very good at music either, but I enjoyed their company.

In college, there weren't so many assholes, but most of the guys (and girls) on the varsity teams weren't very interesting people. At W&M, the jocks aren't dumb (with some exceptions), but even among the relatively smart ones, they didn't seem to be a lot of imagination or original thinking. Most of them were studying something dull, practical and relatively easy like marketing or management, their music and film tastes were boring, they tended to be more conservative than the student body as a whole, and didn't make much of an effort to get to know anyone who wasn't also a jock largely because their schedules were so totally dominated by sports and training.

If those people, who were going to college and had no illusions about going pro, were dull, I can't imagine how dull it would be to be in a pro clubhouse with a bunch of guys who turned pro out of high school and, in a lot of cases, have never even read a book.

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by Rogin the Armchair Fan - 15-05-2008 00:04

World number one, eh. When was the last time I watched a game of tennis?

Now that four of the top ten include:

<http://tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:LIDHgqW6BwJluM:http://www.popcrunch.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/anaivanovic3.jpg>

http://tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:muJNwWU4h0Y0XM:http://www.sportguide.ru/photos/e_dementieva_2.jpg

http://tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:l63W_Lm2eV-AuM:http://image03.webshots.com/3/0/55/30/2320055300060110311ybvKlm_fs.jpg

and of course (now) world number one

<http://tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:fynSJXyS7Y89EM:http://english.pravda.ru/img/idb/photo/1-maria-sharapova---tennis.jpg>

I think women's tennis is about to enter a new golden era. Oh yes. New balls, please ...

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 15-05-2008 00:08

disgraceful

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by Rogin the Armchair Fan - 15-05-2008 00:42

You can forget your "moral superiority", everyone always fancied (sorry, favoured) Chrissy Evert against Martina Navratilova, back in the day. And don't mention Evonne Cawley, or Gabriella Sabatini...

(only having a laugh, everyone, I hope you know I am...)

Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 15-05-2008 02:38

As if to make my point for me...

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/13/AR2008051302934_Comments.html

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by Mercedes Actros - 16-05-2008 09:54

Henin whacking a beautifully stylish backhand down the line past a flailing Williams sister, while yelling "Allez!", was one of the most exhilarating sights in sport.

She's had a tough life. Her childhood wasn't easy, and she lacks some of the physical assets a lot of the other top players have (shut up, Rogin. I don't mean it like that), but she pushed her body to the limit to try to compensate for that, which must have taken it's toll.

She deserves everything she gets, and I for one will really miss her.

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by ykikamoocow - 21-05-2008 12:01

This may sound like an incredibly bold statement to make, but Justine Henin was the most technically complete player of her generation. There was no shot she could not make.

But it has been a sad reflection of the women's game that power continues to reign over finesse. Her lack of a Wimbledon title was testament to the fact that she lost out to women who were almost a foot taller and who could hit the ball harder than most men. If this was a boxing contest it would not be allowed.

You look at the likes of Federer, a finesse player who revels in the five set format because even players who can hit the ball more powerfully (such as Nadal) will burn themselves out eventually. His victory over Nadal in last year's Wimbledon final concluded with a comprehensive final set win where his opponent was running on empty and was broken twice.

As it is, either of the Williams sisters just let rip and win most games in under an hour. Henin could also do this, but with exquisite shot making instead of physical brutality.

The WTA could do worse than consider a five set format as this may help redress the balance and bring back a game that could be as beautiful to watch as the pin ups posted earlier in this thread. As it is, with Henin out of the way, the 'allezs' are now dominated with Seles-like grunts. Not pleasing to the eyes (or ears).

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Re:Justine Henin retires

Posted by loose cannon - 13-06-2008 09:53

Besides being one of the most diminutive no.1 in the history of tennis, she also made it to the top while coming from a club in the Belgian equivalent of Pigsville in the Ardennes.

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