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Serena Williams Voted The Most-Marketable Female Athlete

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The Women's World Cup kicks off this Saturday in the U.S., evoking memories of the U.S. team's victorious run in the '99 event, a landmark for women's sports in this country. In the four years since, American fans have witnessed the unsuccessful project that was the WUSA, the continued development of the WNBA, the emergence of a new breed of women's tennis stars, and female golfers taking their turns with the men. While women's sports continue to struggle to gain a foothold in the U.S. sports marketplace, some top female athletes have gained the attention of marketers and consumers alike. Recognizing this, THE DAILY posed the question, "Who is the most marketable female athlete?" to about 60 marketers, sponsorship consultants and members of the media. The results of our survey indicate that tennis star Serena Williams most possesses that rare combination of on-field ability and off-field personality and marketability. Rounding out the top five are golf's Annika Sorenstam and soccer's Mia Hamm, followed by Serena's sister, Venus, and the WNBA's Lisa Leslie. The last such survey THE DAILY conducted was in '98, when Hamm was named the most-marketable female athlete, followed by figure skating's Michelle Kwan, Venus Williams, figure skating's Tara Lipinski and tennis' Anna Kournikova.

METHODOLOGY: For this year's survey, respondents were asked to list, in order, their five most-marketable female athletes. Points were awarded on a sliding five-point scale. A player drawing a first-place vote was awarded five points, a second place vote earned four points, and so on. The maximum number of points an athlete could earn was 280. Serena Williams tallied 34 first-place votes, or 60.7% of the top choices, and garnered 219 total points.

RANK	ATHLETE	SPORT	% OF 1ST PLACE					TOTAL	%	
			1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH			
1)	Serena Williams	Tennis	34	6	7	2	0	49	219	60.71%
	Annika Sorenstam	Golf	12	14	8	5	6	45	156	21.42%
3)	Mia Hamm	Soccer	4	10	12	13	2	41	124	7.14%

4)	Venus Williams	Tennis	0	14	5	7	4	30	89	0%
5)	Lisa Leslie	Basketball	1	1	7	8	7	24	53	1.78%
6)	Anna Kournikova	Tennis	1	3	2	1	9	16	34	1.78%
t7)	Michelle Kwan	Figure Skating	2	1	1	2	4	10	25	3.57%
t7)	Marion Jones	Track	2	0	1	4	4	11	25	3.57%
9)	Michelle Wie	Golf	0	1	2	2	5	10	19	0%
10)	Sue Bird	Basketball	0	0	3	1	3	7	14	0%



Serena Gets Extra Credit For Appealing To All Audiences

MISS POPULARITY: A dominating presence on the tennis court, Serena Williams has transcended the sport. Williams is getting her feet wet in acting, having already made a cameo on ABC's "My Wife & Kids," and she is set to play a role in the Showtime drama "Street Time." Serena's endorsement roster includes deals with Puma, McDonald's, Wrigley and Avon. 16W Marketing co-Founder Frank Vuono said, "Serena's desire to pursue an acting career will only boost her popularity. She has a great personality, clean image, and continues to improve on and off the court." The Bonham Group Chair Dean Bonham added of Serena, "Sexy, sassy, strong. If she stays healthy, she has marketing legs. Extra points for her ability to appeal to multicultural audiences." Drotman Communications Founder Doug Drotman said Serena has "the ability to reach different target audiences — black, white, young, old, rich and poor." ESPN's Michele

Tafoya added, "Serena continues to dominate a sport that gets plenty of exposure. Add to that her smile, good looks, flare for fashion and her controversial family, and you've got an interesting and highly marketable commodity."

HOW SWEDE IT IS: Sorenstam insists she joined the men at the PGA Tour Bank of America Colonial in May only to challenge her game, but the media frenzy that ensued carried her to a whole new level of celebrity. Sorenstam, with 46 LPGA titles, has deals with companies including Callaway, Mercedes-Benz, Kraft, KFC and Microsoft. Bonham said, "She has the attention of sponsors, the media, TV audiences and on-site attendees; that's a marketing grand slam." USA Today's Christine Brennan: "She's the feel-good story of the year, ... and that clearly has translated to her name recognition, her marketability, her earning power in golf and outside golf, and her general girl-next-door popularity in a year of misbehavior in sports." Millsport CEO Jim Millman said Sorenstam has a "healthy, inspiring perspective on the game, with a sense of humor that comes through." CSMG Exec VP Nova Lanktree added the KFC TV spot featuring Sorenstam "has been criticized so harshly, but I think it does not work mostly because (co-star) Jason Alexander did not work with her very well."



Sorenstam Rides BofA Publicity To Larger Marketing Presence

AMERICAN GIRL: Unfortunately for Mia Hamm, the recent demise of the WUSA will no doubt limit her opportunities in the U.S. next year and beyond. But the upcoming World Cup gives Hamm and her U.S. teammates a chance to show that the sport is still strong in this country. Hamm counts blue-chip brands Gatorade and Nike among



Hamm Remains The Most Recognizable Women's Soccer Player

her sponsors. Gemini Sports President Rob Yowell said, "She's still the darling of women's soccer and the name which most people will identify with as a female athlete." Soccer continues to be the most popular sport worldwide, and eBay Sports VP Lorna Bornstein pointed out that Hamm is "the most-recognized female soccer player in the world." Another hook Hamm has is her engagement to popular Red Sox SS Nomar Garciaparra, and Pickett Advertising Exec Creative Dir Bob Dorfman said, "Her upcoming marriage to Nomar could qualify her for a new range of family-oriented marketing opportunities." IMG/Muhleman Marketing President Max Muhleman added, "Kids love her — always a special edge — and she has the look that Hollywood would want if it designed its own female soccer superstar."

VENUS IF YOU WILL: Venus Williams, a former top-ranked player, has since taken a back seat to younger sister Serena both on and off the court. But the elder Williams still has Reebok, Wilsons Leather and McDonald's in her endorsement portfolio. Dorfman said, "Venus may not be the player her sister is, but she's still a household name and face, with brains to match her beauty, proven commercial talent, and legitimate role model appeal." Steiner Sports Exec VP Matt Lalin said, "All the same qualities as her sister, but it's apparent her reign at the top was brief. It's a little bit like 'we couldn't afford Serena, so we took Venus' if you're an advertiser."



Meanwhile, the Williams duo is also lauded for what they offer as a sister act. Relay Sports Marketing CEO Wally Hayward said, "Individually, Serena and Venus are powerful endorsers for clients, however, together they are unstoppable on and off the court." But Real Sports Magazine Publisher Amy Love said the Williams sisters "need to develop individual identities," and added that they are "not yet positioned properly with non-sports related endorsements." Edelman Sports GM Peter Land: "They have a dominant position in the marketplace and at this stage I'm not sure what's left out there for them."

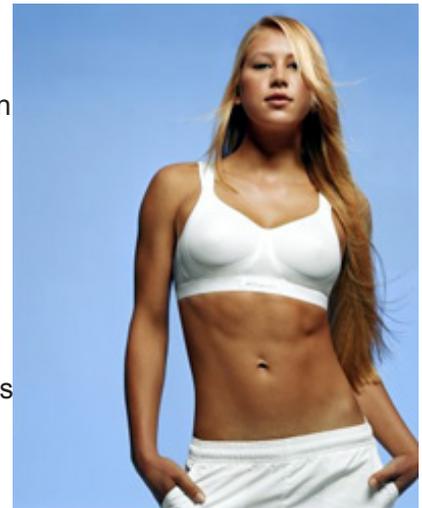


CENTER OF ATTENTION: Lisa Leslie rounds out the top five. The Sparks star, who last season became the first player in the league to dunk in a WNBA game, has two WNBA championships to her credit. Leslie endorses Sony's PlayStation and Kraft Foods. SportsCorp President Marc Ganis said Leslie is the "most-marketable player in a league with brilliant marketing muscle behind it." But Edelman Sports' Land added, "She hasn't developed her off-court persona. Paired with the right company, which could put significant levels of spending behind her, Lisa has huge upside potential. She has the ability to speak to a multicultural audience." But in the microcosm of the WNBA, Sports Business Group Principal David Carter said Leslie is "playing to smaller and smaller audiences all the time."

THE REST OF THE FIELD: Anna Kournikova ranks No. 6 in our survey, and Q Sports Founder Patrick Quinn said, "Though some would argue the 'sport' part, the fact is she was on the tour and good enough that people

Leslie's Profile Could Grow

know her name — she did her job, let the marketers do theirs." Premier Management Group President Evan Morgenstein: "She can always keep her momentum going by being linked with the pro athlete 'flavor' of the month." Meanwhile, Michelle Kwan and Marion Jones tied for seventh. 16W Marketing's Vuono said Kwan "still seems to carry the torch when it comes to the Winter Olympics and Stars on Ice." USA Today's Brennan: "Because of skating's appeal, Kwan reaches people most athletes don't reach, especially women." As for Jones, she had a baby this summer, and Wieden & Kennedy's Tom Winner said it would be a "great story if she comes back strong" during next summer's Athens Games. But Real Sports Magazine's Love said the "lack of track & field interest makes holding a strong U.S. endorsement position tough in non-Olympic years." Ninth belongs to 13-year-old golf phenom Michelle Wie, and Drotman said, "Anyone who thought Tiger [Woods] would not pan out when he was winning amateur tourneys does not want to miss the boat here." Steiner Sports' Lalin said Wie "will have tremendous appeal to schoolgirls for scores of products." The final spot in the top ten goes to the WNBA's Sue Bird, and ESPN's Tafoya said, "Young boys swoon over her. She's the kind of girl you'd definitely bring home to your parents. She's got looks, brains and incredible talent."



Anna Still A Big Name Despite Lack Of Tournament Success

Who do you think is the most marketable female athlete? Vote in [The DAILY POLL](#).

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