

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

JUSTINE HENIN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM SONY ERICSSON WTA TOUR

Three time World No.1-ranked Belgian ends glittering career with seven Grand Slam singles titles

ST PETERSBURG, FL, USA – Tributes are flowing in from around the world for Justine Henin, who on Wednesday announced her immediate retirement from the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour. The 25-year-old Belgian became the first woman in the history of professional tennis to retire from the sport while ranked No.1 in the world.

Henin, winner of 41 Sony Ericsson WTA Tour singles titles – including seven Grand Slam championships – is currently in her 117th week as the World No.1, sixth on the all-time list. She has amassed \$19,461,375 in career prize money and compiled a 493-107 win-loss record in singles.

But more importantly than any statistics, 5-foot, 5 ³/₄-inch (1.67 m) Henin was renowned for her spectacular backhand, incredible athleticism and unrivalled mental fortitude and work ethic.

"Justine Henin will be remembered as one of the all-time great champions in women's tennis, and a woman who made up for her lack of size with a will to win and fighting spirit that was second to none," said Larry Scott, Sony Ericsson WTA Tour CEO. "It is rare that an athlete leaves at the very top of her game in this day and age, but Justine has always played by her own rules, in the very best sense of those words. History will remember Justine for not only her seven Grand Slam titles and three years finishing as the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour's World No.1, but for one of the most graceful backhands the sport has ever seen and an ability to overcome any and all obstacles placed in her way on the tennis court and off."

"Pound for pound Justine is the greatest player of her generation," said Sony Ericsson WTA Tour Founder and tennis legend Billie Jean King. "I trust she has not come to this decision quickly or easily and I wish her the very best. Justine is an extraordinary player and a special person and a true champion both in tennis and in life."

Added Scott: "This is a sad day for our sport and for her millions of fans around the world, but I know that I speak for so many in wishing Justine the very best in her future endeavors and hope that she will stay connected to the sport to which she gave so much."

Among her many accomplishments, Henin achieved the following:

- Finished three seasons as the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour World No.1 (2003, 2006, 2007);
- Won her seventh and final grand slam singles title at the 2007 US open, beating both Serena and Venus Williams sisters en route, the only player ever to beat both Williams sisters in winning a major title;
- In 2007, she had her most successful season ever, winning 10 titles (including two majors) and became the first female athlete to pass the \$5-million mark in a season;

The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour is the world's largest premier professional sport for women with more than 2,000 players representing 90 nations competing for \$70.8 million in prize money at the Tour's 60 events in 34 countries. More than 4.7 million people attended women's tennis events in 2007 with millions more watching events on television networks around the world. The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour season concludes with the Sony Ericsson Championships – Doha 2008 in Doha, Qatar, November 4-9, 2008. Further information on the Tour can be found on the Internet at www.sonyericssonwtatour.com.



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- One of the most successful players of all-time on clay, winning Roland Garros four times in five years (2003, 2005, 2006, 2007);
- Won every major title except Wimbledon, taking the Australian, French and US Opens at least once, along with two season-ending Sony Ericsson Championships (2006, 2007) and an Olympic gold medal (singles) in Athens in 2004; she also led Belgium to its first Fed Cup title in 2001.

Henin is the first current World No.1 to retire from professional tennis, and only the fifth Top 5 retiree, after Margaret Court in 1977 (No.5), Chris Evert in 1989 (No.4), Steffi Graf in 1999 (No.3), and fellow Belgian Kim Clijsters in 2007 (No.4).

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