Written by Ryan T. Scott Monday, 07 July 2014 15:43



A generation of historic athletes is nearing its twilight.

The ouster of both Venus and Serena Williams in the early rounds of Wimbledon 2014 is one of the most impactful recent examples of this trend. They say Father Time is undefeated, and *they* are correct. That being so, if you are a connoisseur of athletic achievement, it's about time to take your last good look at the generation who cleared out some elbow room for the masses, on the world stage of sports.

Serena Williams lost to 25th-seeded Alize Cornet of France (1-6, 6-3, 6-4) in the third round of Wimbledon. The younger Williams sister, Serena, 32, also lost to Cornet, 25, in February at the Dubai Championship. According to ranking Cornet is no slouch, yet when younger players start finding consistent methods to defeat aging champions, Father Time is whispering sweet something's into the elders' ear.

"I don't know what I did wrong," exclaimed Serena Williams after the match. By contrast, the rising Cornet spoke with a firm confidence in post match interviews, as if confirming early mastery over a school subject.

Serena Williams, currently still the No. 1 ranked player in the world, is a five time Wimbledon champion, trailing Martina Navratilova (nine) and placing her in a tie for eighth all-time. Navratilova won her final Wimbledon tournament at the age of 33, with a similar style – in terms of physical dominance – as Serena Williams.

Overall, Steffi Graf is the all-time leader (in the Open Era) in women's singles tennis Grand Slam victories (U.S Open, French Open, Australian Open, and Wimbledon) with 22. During her most dominant stretch, the early 2000s, Serena Williams was easily seen as a candidate to surpass Graf and Navratilova as the most accomplished female tennis player of all time. With

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17 major championships, Serena Williams has an arduous road ahead to surpass her predecessors.

Williams' older sister Venus, held a strong moment of dominance in the sport before Serena's reign truly gained footing. Venus Williams was the first American Black woman to achieve the World Tennis Association No. 1 ranking in 2002. The elder Williams, who lost in the second round of this year's Wimbledon, is 12 on the all-time Grand Slam list with seven.

Together the Williams sisters have a historic resume of singles and doubles titles, including the most Olympic gold medals, seven, of all women contestants. Various injuries and health issues, as well as family tragedy, have interrupted the benefit of smooth career paths, but the core story of their door opening dominance in the historically monochrome tennis industry supersedes any criticisms or excuses directed their way.

Forerunners such as Bill Russell, Althea Gibson, Arthur Ashe, Jackie Robinson, Jack Johnson and innumerable others kicked open the diversity door for all athletes in the pantheon of modern professional sports. The Williams sisters hold a unique place among the successive generations who have benefited from their forerunners leadership. Especially in the cases of the Williams' sisters, and Tiger Woods in golf, the story of "train a child up" to be great in a specific sport became a more popular notion. The culture of youth sports development has heightened dramatically in recent decades, and those two family stories are the most celebrated benchmarks on display.

Thus, even more beneficial, the Williams and Woods stories of family and parenting provide clear examples of the overall commitment, vision, access and protection necessary to nurture children to greatness. Hopefully, twilight for these greats is the dawn for a larger generation to come. That's usually how it goes. Courts are open