

One man practicing sportsmanship is
better than a hundred teaching it.

Knute Rockne (1888 - 1931)



CHAPTER 5

Sport





Brilliant Justine bows out at the Top

Many top female tennis players retire early. Kim Clijsters quit at the age of 23, Martina Hingis at 27, Steffi Graf at 30. But when Belgian tennis superstar Justine Henin retired from all professional tennis at the age of 25 in May 2008, she was the first player to do so while a reigning World No. 1.



Justine Henin-Hardenne © Glenn Thomas



Justine Henin-Hardenne © Glenn Thomas

For Henin, the decision to give up all competitive tennis capped a remarkable year and a half which saw her achieve unprecedented success on the court while also finding growing contentment off it. Professionally, 2007 was a dream year. Her seventh and last Grand Slam triumph, the 2007 U.S. Open, is considered by many to be her finest. For the first time in her career she defeated both Venus and Serena Williams back to back in a “memorable display of flowing, aggressive all-court tennis”. Despite being smaller and less muscular, at 5 foot, 5 inches, than the more athletic Williams sisters, Henin outplayed, out-fought and out-ran them.

Tennis experts point to Henin’s mental toughness, the completeness and variety of her game, her “lyrically beautiful” and clinical one-handed backhand, as well as her speed and agility as being the key ingredients of her success.

At the end of the 2007 season, in the WTA championship final in Madrid, Henin recorded a three hour, 25 minute victory over Maria

Sharapova, a fierce competitor for the World No 1 crown. “That day I said to myself, I have lived everything and given everything,” Henin recalls. That “everything” includes 41 WTA singles titles, more than US\$19 million in prize money, four French Open championships, one Australian Open and two US Open titles. (The only Grand Slam title that eluded her was Wimbledon.) She also won the WTA Tour Championships twice and a singles gold medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics. In 2007 she became the first female athlete to pass the \$5-million mark in one season, winning 10 titles and two majors.

How was it possible that a player initially considered too mentally and physically vulnerable to reach the very top could overcome these hurdles and hold the World No. 1 position for 117 weeks? Various factors played a role, including good coaching, an incredible work-ethic and sheer determination. Gruelling workouts on her fitness and her forehand, with Pat Etcheberry in Florida for example, helped her to transform her game. Henin also had exceptional timing and

combined athleticism with grace. “What she lacked in height she made up in solidity and timing,” writes Verlyn Klinkenborg in the New York Times. “The ball simply vanished in the force of her cyclonic swing, which, for all its power, has never lacked grace.”

Former tennis great John McEnroe described Henin’s one-handed backhand as simply the best single-handed backhand in the women’s or men’s game, Federer included. Veteran sports writer Simon Barnes said that in the face of more powerful opponents, Henin could not afford to be anything less than perfect. “It could only be in the perfection of her timing, the coincidence of sweet spot, bounce, footwork and angle. She seemed to have no margin for error whatsoever; perfection simply had to be her first resort.”

In her personal life, Henin has found new ways to express her emotions in the past two years and has grown personally as a result. Klinkenborg describes the “surfacing of Justine Henin’s emotions” as one of the “central stories in women’s tennis the past two years”. Her divorce from her husband of four years, Pierre-Yves Hardenne, her reconnection with her estranged family and the growing sense of a “happier woman emerging on the court and off” marked a shift in Justine. Ironically, it was this newfound sense of contentment which seems to have blunted her fiercely competitive drive. Well before her mother died when Justine was 12 years old, she developed the kind of intense concentration which is required to reach the level did. Over the past while she appeared to be growing out of that, and looking beyond tennis to other challenges.

A few weeks before she was due to return to Roland Garros as the three-time defending champion, the “Queen of Clay” realised that she had, in her own words, “lost the flame”. Explaining her decision to a press conference at her tennis club (Club Justine N1), Justine said, “I invested enormously in my sport, since the age of five. I always lived for tennis, and it’s without regret because I lived emotions which I will never forget ... I don’t feel sadness, but rather a release, a relief, a glance towards the future. I always seek to build and change, and not only by tennis.”

As for that future, an important aspect of her new life will be inspiring young people through her Foundation and her Academy. Justine’s coach of 12 years, Carlos Rodriguez, will be working full-time at her 6th Sense Academy while Justine is keen to impart to youngsters some of the morals, values and emotions she learned from a game which has given her so much. She has, as she says, turned a page and while she will always remained involved in tennis, she is embarking on new adventures.



Justine Henin Hardenne - Miami



Gazet Van Antwerpen Cyclo-cross Trophy

Cyclo-cross nirvana and a major popular party. During the eight events there are more than 100,000 fans in the field and millions in front of their TV sets.



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A packet of French fries, a pint of beer, and some small talk with the cyclists... no other menu is more attractive than that of the Gazet van Antwerpen Cyclo-cross Trophy. From the start on the Koppenberg on 1 November, over Niel, Hasselt, Essen, Loenhout, Baal and Lille to the final chord in Oostmalle: it's a party everywhere.

Will Sven Nys succeed himself? Will Bart Wellens become the top? Or will World Champion Lars Boom put a spoke in the wheels?

Whoever wins, we always have a party!

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ING Antwerp 10 Miles and Marathon

The ING Antwerp 10 Miles & Marathon is the largest running event in Flanders. More than 23,000 runners take part in the Marathon, the Relay Marathon, the 10 Miles, the Ladies Run 5 km, the Short Run 5 km or the Kids Run.



Each year, at the end of April, the city of Antwerp ensures a warm welcome for runners from all over the world. More than 20 different nationalities take part in the runs. The streets are completely closed off to the traffic and more than 50,000 supporters encourage the participants. That way, the runners get to see a unique picture of one of the most beautiful cities in Belgium. The passage through the famous Kennedy tunnel under the Scheldt provides that little bit extra which makes the ING Antwerp 10 Miles & Marathon an unforgettable sporting event.

The ING Antwerp Marathon is the newest distance at this top event. After two years, already more than 2,000 marathon runners have found their way to Antwerp. Especially the finish on the Antwerp 'Grote Markt' is an incredible experience for every participant.



www.ingantwerp10miles.be



Tour of Belgium

The Tour of Belgium is a five-day bicycle race which was held for the first time in 1908 and then annually – apart from a number of interruptions, notably for the two world wars - until 1990.



After an absence of 12 years, in 2002 Golazo sports decided to revive the Tour of Belgium. With the formation of the UCI ProTour in 2005, the organisation briefly came under pressure, but in the meantime the Tour of Belgium has again become an annual fixture on the calendar of the UCI Europe Tour. Each year during the last week of May, Belgium is enthralled by its own tour, which generates massive public interest along the Belgian roads. With both flat and hilly stretches and a

time trial, the Tour of Belgium offers excellent opportunities for every type of rider.

The Tour of Belgium boasts a dazzling winners list, featuring such major names as Rik Van Looy, Freddy Maertens and Eddy Merckx. Each year the organisation can rely on a strong field of participants, with ProTour teams from Belgium and abroad. In addition, the Tour of Belgium also offers young Belgian talents a chance to measure themselves against top names from the cycling world.

Belgacom Memorial Van Damme

What initially was meant as a onetime tribute to one of Belgian's most popular and gifted sportsmen has become a real "classic" in this country.



Indeed, the "Belgacom Memorial Van Damme" has become one of the biggest sports events in Belgium and at the same time one of the greatest athletics competitions in the world. Year after year, some 50.000 spectators fill the Brussels' King Baudouin Stadium for what is so much more than a traditional athletics meeting. The Belgacom Memorial Van Damme is a thrilling cocktail of great sports, music, fireworks and entertainment of all sorts. The world's best athletes serve the crowd some 18

competitions, each worth an Olympic final; African drums accompany the long distance runners and when the atmosphere in the stadium has reached a peak a mini-concert ends the party.

Nobody would have ever expected such result, back in 1977 when seven Belgian sportswriters decided to launch this "Memorial" to commemorate their friend Ivo Van Damme, who got tragically killed in a car accident, less than five months after his double triumph at the Olympic Games in Montreal, where he won the silver medal in both the 800 and the 1500m.

But after a remarkably emotional and successful first edition, on 16 August 1977, the crowd asked for more and slowly but surely the "Van Damme" became a tradition and a real "society event", visited every year by thousands of loyal fans and often by a member of the Royal Family.

The next edition of the Belgacom Memorial Van Damme takes place on Friday 5 September 2008.

www.belgacommemorialvandamme.be



HealthCity

Feeling good feeling healthy, the central theme of our international fitness and relaxation group. Experience HealthCity at more than 100 clubs in three countries.



Mission

An incomparable combination of luxurious facilities, a pleasant environment and high-class service - this is what makes HealthCity so unique. As a full-service company, HealthCity is entirely focused on the personal health of its members but does so in a superbly pleasant way. Feeling good is important.

Besides the classic fitness and group courses, the company also offers the opportunity to practice a wide range of

other activities, such as tennis, squash or badminton. Or maybe relaxing in a sauna or hammam is more to your taste. Or a refreshing dive in the swimming pool. Or take it easy and work on your tan in the solarium? All this is possible in one of our 100 international clubs. And we will keep on growing, so we can give everybody the possibility to work on his or her health in an active and relaxing way.

All Inclusive

In this All Inclusive concept everything is

included: fitness, group courses, wellness, drinks, free dvd rent... If you choose a GOLD-membership you have access to every HealthCity club. So you can work on your body and health wherever you are!

Facilities:

- Fitness: cardio and power training
- Group courses (Les Mills)
- Tennis, squash, badminton, bowling
- Wellness: sauna, solarium, steam bath, swimming pool...



Company Fit

Healthy employees lie at the basis of a good team spirit, that is why we introduced Company Fit. It is comparable to the All Inclusive concept but we offer your company special conditions. For more information check www.healthcity.be.

The story

René Moos, Eric Wilborts and Dennis Aarts are the initiators of the HealthCity adventure. After the professional tennis careers of René and Eric, they began managing tennis courts. The first results were visible as “het Arnolduspark”. HealthCity is especially known for its fitness facilities and that’s where Dennis came along, his life was basically focused on fitness and judo. Now we can offer our members a fully-equipped fitness environment with extra facilities!

HealthCity International

All over the Netherlands these clubs were managed by these three gentlemen. In 2004 the two regional organisations were merged and baptised into HealthCity! Thanks to Waterland, who bought half of the shares in 2005, some large investments were possible. An acquisition of different clubs and the construction of new clubs could be realised.

In 2006 HealthCity crossed borders and expanded to Belgium and Germany. With 29 clubs in Belgium, over 50 clubs in the Netherlands and more than 23 in Germany, HealthCity has evolved toward an inevitable player in the fitness world.



- Lounge
- Kids corner
- Free drinks & DVD's

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A well-equipped fitness for a basic price. For only €6,95 a week you can improve your condition and strengthen your muscles.

Facilities:

- Fitness: cardio and power training
- Group courses (Les Mills)

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