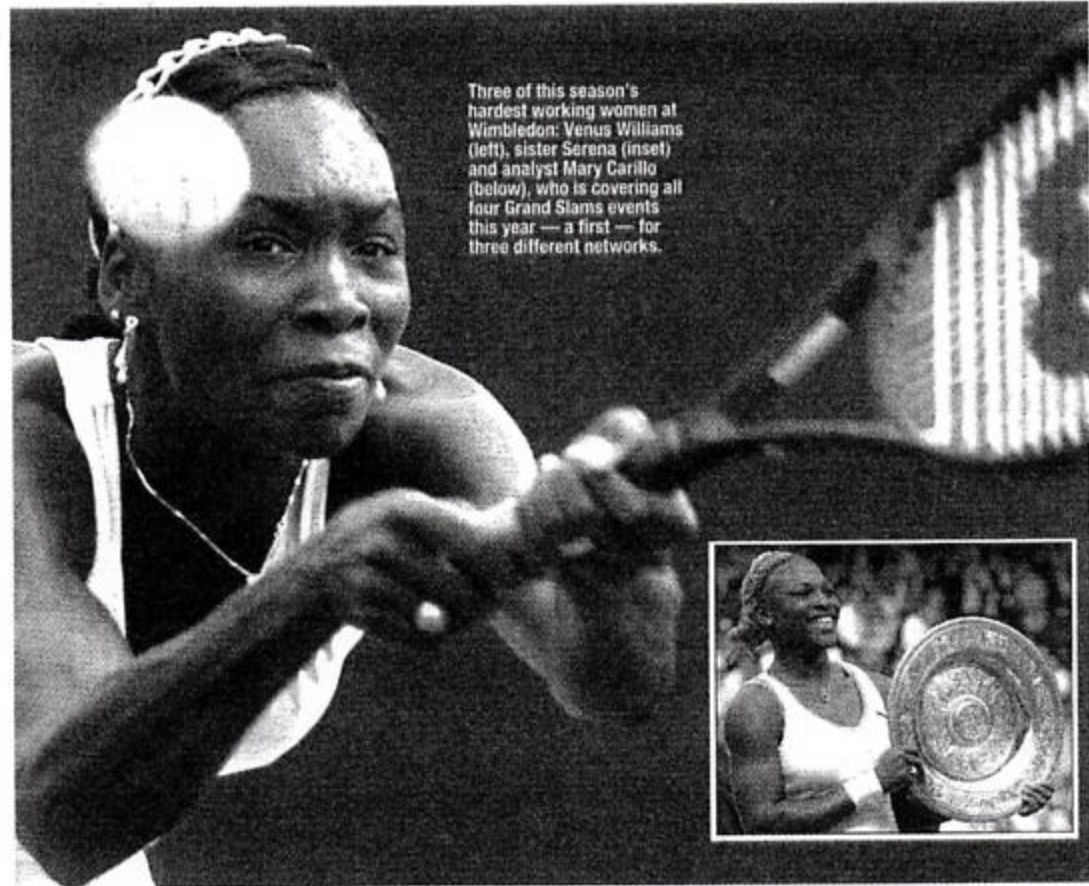


# Wimbledon

## Mary Carillo's wicked top-spin



Three of this season's hardest working women at Wimbledon: Venus Williams (left), sister Serena (inset) and analyst Mary Carillo (below), who is covering all four Grand Slams events this year — a first — for three different networks.



By MICHAEL GILTZ

If you want to televise a winning tennis match, you need a few things: top stars like Serena Williams and Andy Roddick, umpires, tennis balls, a great space like Center Court at Wimbledon and, of course, Mary Carillo.

Indeed, Carillo — who began on the fringes of television by covering minor women's tour events for USA — is now the dominant female voice of TV tennis.

This season, she's covering all four Grand Slam tournaments — on three different networks, ESPN, CBS and NBC. It's a feat that even Bud Collins — the last TV commentator to be considered the face of the game — never did.

John McEnroe once mocked the idea of a woman covering men's tennis, but these days he gladly shares a booth with Carillo covering men and women's matches.

Not incidentally, they go way back. They played together when growing up in Douglaston, Queens, and won the French mixed doubles as pros.

None of this is especially impressive to Carillo's two adolescent children.

"I finally got a job for TNT doing the NBA playoffs and my son looked at me and said, 'Finally you're doing something good!'" says Carillo.

She has impressed everyone else, how-

ever. If anyone can breathe life into American tennis, it's Carillo.

The sport is recovering from the combined blessing and curse of the Williams sisters' absolute dominance, while it awaits the next generation of men players to follow in the footsteps of Andre Agassi, Pete Sampras, and Jim Courier.



Carillo

Carillo's sharp, quick and funny. And — as is rare in sports TV — the players like and respect her.

There is no better platform for her to show off than the grand slam of all, Wimbledon. "Most prestigious? Oh yeah. It's dripping with it," says Carillo. "I'm not big on calling it the 'Temple of this' or the 'Cradle of that.' But it is. I love going there."

Demand for Carillo's analysis on TV elsewhere is growing beyond tennis. She will continue to be a big presence on the next few Olympics and is as regular for "Real Sports With Bryant Gumbel" on HBO.

An upcoming segment for "Real Sports" is a typical Carillo-touch story.

It's about the first World Cup tournament for teams composed of homeless, street-soccer players.

"You've got to assume Europe's homeless soccer can beat the crap out of our homeless soccer," says Carillo.

The story veers from poignant to hilarious as players try to get off methadone so they can make the trip to Austria for the finals.

"This American ex-punk rocker is saying to me, 'Hey, we ain't goin' over there to lose!' This guy's in my face! Then he says, 'We are going over there to win the World Cup!' Course, we've got no place to put it."

That kind of angle is Carillo's signature. She cites Charles Kuralt as an idol and says she would love to get involved with one of the morning news shows down the road.

Also down the road, once her kids — now aged 15 and 11 head to college — is a move back to New York. She just bought a new apartment in Greenwich Village.

"It's the craziest little place you've ever seen... It used to be a stable. I've got a 750-square-foot place and about 200 of it is this long hallway. If I become a professional bowler, I could write off my apartment."

**WIMBLEDON**  
Sunday, noon, NBC