

WIMBLEDON



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Serena Williams (left) has emerged as the socialite and glamour girl of the two, while the lower-key Venus is merely the No. 1 player in the world.

Williams sisters' individuality is showing

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IT'S BEEN 8 YEARS since Richard Williams took two bony girls and his marble bag of sports knowledge out of the shadows of a drug-riddled neighborhood and brought braids and beads to mainstream professional tennis.

Venus and Serena Williams now are dozens of titles and millions of dollars removed from the "Once upon a time" part of one of the most remarkable sports stories ever.

In fact, they are the top two women's seeds for Wimbledon, which opens today. Venus, the

two-time defending champion is the top seed, Serena second — the same as their world rankings since the French Open finals, a first for sibling.

Yet, the world might as well still be looking at those same two bony girls from Compton, a rundown Los Angeles suburb.

Whether the culprit is a label-driven media, an ever-changing sports marketing world or a controlling, power-starved father, for all their "happily ever after" endings, reigning queens Venus and Serena Williams remain packaged twin princesses to many on the outside.

In 8 years, the reality might be

VENUS & SERENA

Williams sisters, by the numbers:

	Venus	Serena
Age	22	20
Birthdate	6/17/80	9/26/81
Height	6-1	5-8
Weight	160	130
Years Pro	8	7
World Rank	1	2
Career Titles	33	23
Singles	25	15
Doubles	8	8
Grand Slam Titles	10	8
Singles	4	2
Doubles	6	6
Career Money	\$10.2M	\$7.6M
Singles W-L	278-63	183-42

that a lot more has changed for Venus, 22, and Serena, 20, than the shedding of braids and beads.

They also could be looking to shed the "Williams sisters" moniker that has stunted the growth of their individuality and might have slowed their immediate appeal to those who might choose one day to follow in their footsteps.

For while their titles and endorsements add up, their ultimate legacy figures to be how much they inspire other inner-city youths. This might be the most untapped area of their potential.

"Richard Williams told us this

was going to happen, saying they would one day rise off ratty parks to best in the world," CBS analyst Mary Carillo said. "That kind of prophecy is something that has to be discussed. While it has been hard to separate them as a package, I think Serena doesn't want to be known as Venus' little sister and wants to get out of the web of her father."

It's a Sunday afternoon and Sylvia Carlross, 17, and Destiny Jones, 16, are shoe shopping at

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