Name: _____ Date: _____

The Dish Called Venus

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 742 words

At Wimbledon, a tennis event in London, the women's winner gets a silver dish. It is nearly 19 inches wide. It weighs about five pounds. The club that runs the event bought it in 1886. People call it the Venus Rosewater Dish. In 2000, a player named Venus won it.

The club bought the dish 94 years before this Venus was born. It is covered with pictures from old Greek and Roman stories. Four small panels show air, water, earth and fire. Its design came from an old basin that is in a museum in Paris.

Venus Williams was 14 when she played her first pro match, on October 31, 1994, in Oakland, California. She had no ranking, so the event invited her. That is called a wild card. She beat a player ranked near 60th in the world, 6-3, 6-4. One report said she was already serving 115 miles per hour.

In her next match, she led one of the top players in the world, 6-3 and 3-1. Then she lost the last nine games. She lost that match. Years later, a tennis magazine marking its 50th year put her debut on a list of 50 moments that shaped the sport.

Here is how a match is scored. A game is usually won with four points. A set takes six games, and a player must win by two. At Wimbledon, women play the best of three sets. When a player is one point from the win, that is called match point.

In 1997, at the US Open, Venus was 17. She was unseeded. Seeds are the players an event ranks highest, so they do not meet early. She reached the final anyway. A news report said no unseeded woman had done that since 1968, when pros joined the big events.

Then came Wimbledon in 2000. Venus was seeded fifth. In the final, she beat the player who had won the year before, 6-3, 7-6. It was her first singles title at a Grand Slam. A Grand Slam is one of the four biggest events. A year later, she won Wimbledon again.

In 2005, she was seeded 14th. In the final, she faced the top seed. Venus lost the first set, 4-6. She won the second set in a tiebreak. A tiebreak is a short game played when a set is tied at six games each. Then the third set began.

In the third set, her opponent reached championship point. One more point would end the match. Venus hit a backhand winner down the line and saved it. Later, she won a game on her opponent's serve to lead 8-7. The crowd watched closely.

At Wimbledon then, the last set had no tiebreak. A player had to win by two games. Venus held on and won it, 9-7. The final took two hours and 45 minutes. As of November 2026, it is the longest women's final at Wimbledon by time. It was her third title there.

In 2007, Venus was seeded 23rd and ranked 31st in the world. She won Wimbledon again, 6-4, 6-1 in the final. No woman ranked that low had won it since computer rankings began in 1975. In 2023, a woman who was ranked 42nd, with no seed at all, passed that mark.

That year, Wimbledon changed a rule. On February 22, 2007, the head of the club said women and men would get the same prize money. The US Open had done this since 1973. Venus won that summer. She was the first Wimbledon women's champion paid the same amount as the men's champion.

In 2008, at 28, Venus won the final, 7-5, 6-4. It was her fifth Wimbledon title. She had won in 2000, 2001, 2005, 2007 and 2008. Each time, she won the Venus Rosewater Dish. She also won the US Open in 2000 and 2001. That made seven Grand Slam singles titles.

Venus kept playing for many years. In July 2025, at 45, she won a match in Washington. It was her first singles match in 16 months. In January 2026, she became the oldest woman to play in the Australian Open singles draw. In August 2026, at 46, she played her 26th US Open.

Champions do not keep the dish. They get a copy that is three-quarters as big. The real dish stays with the club, and the names of champions are engraved on it. Venus Williams's name is on it five times.

Questions

1. Where did Venus Williams play her first pro match?

A. London
B. Oakland, California
C. Paris

2. In the book, what does it mean that a player is "seeded"?

A. The tournament ranks her among its top players
B. She grows up on a farm
C. She must play first

3. Why was Venus Williams's 2007 win a surprise?

A. She was the top seed
B. She had never played Wimbledon
C. She was ranked 31st, lower than earlier champions

4. How many times did Venus Williams win Wimbledon in singles?

A. Three
B. Five
C. Seven

5. What did the club announce on February 22, 2007?

A. Women and men would be paid the same

B. A new dish would be made

C. The event would move to Paris

Words to know

seeded: ranked high

tiebreak: short deciding game

engraved: cut into metal

copy: close duplicate

Answer key: The Dish Called Venus

1. B. Oakland, California
2. A. The tournament ranks her among its top players
3. C. She was ranked 31st, lower than earlier champions
4. B. Five
5. A. Women and men would be paid the same