

Williams' Wimbledon Woe



Down and out: Serena Williams exited Wimbledon on Saturday last.

On a day when Australia romped to an all too easy win in the Irish Derby, Waterford's footballers and hurlers were involved in Championship action and with the World Cup's last 16 getting underway, it wasn't not too surprising that the first big shock at Wimbledon totally passed me by on Saturday.

Despite managing to catch up on several sports bulletins I was unaware, until I saw the Sunday papers, that the women's number one seed and five times champion Serena Williams had been unceremoniously dumped out of the tournament by the unheralded Alize Cornet of France.

Williams had apparently been cruising in the match winning the first set by six games to one but the lengthy rain delay (the match was halted for four and a half hours) certainly seemed to halt her momentum and the hot favourite eventually succumbed to the number 25 seed 1-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Williams will hardly be consoled by the £71,000stg she is due to pocket for losing in the third round while her exit marks the first time since 2006 that either of the Williams' sisters have failed to reach the second week of Wimbledon.

The defeat of Williams at least blows the women's tournament wide open and the line-up for next Saturday's final is now far more difficult to forecast.

The same sadly can't be said for the men's game. It's hardly the most difficult prediction in the World to make that next Sunday's final will be contested between two of the 'Big Four' of men's tennis; Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray.

In fact the four have dominated the game so much in recent years that with the exception of Stanislas Wawrinka, who defeated Nadal in this year's Australian Open, the last 17 Grand Slam finals have been won by one of the four while another one of the four have reached 15 of those finals.

Whoever is successful next weekend will pick up a winner's cheque for £1,760,000 up 10 per cent on last year's prize money while the loser pockets £880,000.

Whoever wins the women's final will earn exactly the same amount prompting once again the question of whether the women deserve equal prize money given that their matches are played over the best of three sets while the men's are best of five.

While the counter argument that the difference in physiology between men and women means that both sexes put in equal effort despite the difference in the length of matches is entirely valid the question of spectators value for money is an altogether different question.

In the second round it took Serena Williams just 49 minutes to dispose of South Africa's Chanelle Scheepers 6-1, 6-1 while Rafael Nadal's second round encounter with Lukas Rozol lasted for over three hours before the Spaniard finally emerged victorious after a four set battle, surely much more value for money for fans who pay £75 for their tickets at SW19.